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Education as Social Construction:
Contributions to Theory, Research and Practice

Thalia Dragonas, Kenneth J. Gergen, Sheila McNamee, Eleftheria Tseliou
Editors

A Taos Institute Publication

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The Taos Institute is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the development of social constructionist theory and practice for purposes of world benefit. Constructionist theory and practice locate the source of meaning, value, and action in communicative relations among people. Our major investment is in fostering relational processes that can enhance the welfare of people and the world in which they live. Taos Institute Publications offers contributions to cutting-edge theory and practice in social construction. Our books are designed for scholars, practitioners, students, and the openly curious public. The **Focus Book Series** provides brief introductions and overviews that illuminate theories, concepts, and useful practices. The **Tempo Book Series** is especially dedicated to the general public and to practitioners. The **Books for Professionals Series** provides in-depth works that focus on recent developments in theory and practice. **WorldShare Books** is an online offering of books in PDF format for free download from our website. Our books are particularly relevant to social scientists and to practitioners concerned with individual, family, organizational, community, and societal change.

Kenneth J. Gergen
President, Board of Directors
The Taos Institute

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Table of Contents

List of contributors iv

Education as Social Construction: An Introduction ix
Thalia Dragonas, Kenneth J. Gergen, Sheila McNamee, Eleftheria Tseliou

Section I: Constructionist Theory in Education

1. The Social Construction of Identities: Reflections on 21st Century Education in Light of the *Charlie Hebdo* Slaughter 3
   Jim Cummins

2. Being well: Educated 30
   Tim Corcoran and Tom Billington

3. From Propositions to Practice: Pedagogy for Life as Process 49
   Kenneth J. Gergen

4. Dialogic Learning: Talking our Way into Understanding 62
   Gordon Wells

Section II: Educational Practice

5. Working with Youth at Risk: an Appreciative Approach 92
   Bjørn Hauger and Ingebjørg Mæland

6. Losing the "Lie": Teaching "Intro" from a Social Constructionist Position 108
   Mary M. Gergen

7. Relational Learning in Education 121
   Anne Morrison and Kristen Chorba

8. Co-Creating Joyful Learning and Augmenting Social Skills in Children by Employing Creative Drama 140
   Charru Sharma

9. Changing the World one Verb at a Time: Collaborating with Teachers in Schools in Mexico City
   Sylvia London 156

10. Practicing Relational Thinking in Dealing with Bullying in Schools
    Gitte Haslebo and Gro Emmertsen Lund 168

Section III: Systems Change

11. Sowing Seeds of Synergy: Creative Youth Workshops in a Multi-Cultural Context 192
Anni Vassiliou and Thalia Dragonas

12. Educational Change: A Relational Appoach 213
Loek Schoenmakers

13. School Principals: Problem Solvers and Appreciative Leaders
Xinping Zhang 227

14. Culture Change in Educational Contexts 242
Susan Kay Mossman Riva

Section IV: Research and Evaluation

15. Discourse Analysis and Educational Research Challenge and Promise 263
Eleftheria Tseliou

16. Negotiating the '3Rs': Deconstructing the Politics 283
of 'Rights, Respect and Responsibility' in one English Primary School
Rebecca Webb

17. Communicative Methodology of Research and Evaluation: 297
A Success Story
Aitor Gómez

18. Evaluation as Social Construction 315
Peter Dahler-Larsen

19. Evaluation in a Relational Key 336
Sheila McNamee

20. Assessment and Pedagogy 350
in the Era of Machine-Mediated Learning
Bill Cope and Mary Kalantzis

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Education as Social Construction: An Introduction

Thalia Dragonas ▫ Kenneth J. Gergen ▫ Sheila McNamee ▫ Eleftheria Tseliou

Dialogues on the social construction of reality now sweep across academic disciplines, professions, and national boundaries. There are many reasons for this dynamic exchange. Many find a refreshing sense of liberation in constructionist ideas. For constructionists there are no claims to reality that simply must be embraced, regardless of culture and context. We may approach all claims with curiosity: what do they offer, what do they deny? Many find in the constructionist dialogues an energizing invitation to create. If we are free to understand in many different ways, and there are no necessary logics, then we are invited to play with the taken for granted world we inhabit. Hybrids, fusions, and alternatives all beckon. Still others find in the constructionist dialogues a signal of hope in a world marked by lethal conflict. If we realize that there are no foundations for our beliefs and values -other than those residing in communities of agreement- we may remove the sharp edges of separation. Replacing the drift toward mutual annihilation, we are encouraged to develop ways of crossing communal boundaries. Such promises have touched all quarters of the intellectual and practical world. In the present volume, we focus on a single but enormously important domain of application: education. No other institution in the world is as powerful in shaping our future. Exploring the intersection between education and social constructionist ideas is rich in potential.

For those unfamiliar with the dialogues on social construction (closely allied with social constructivism) a brief sketch of the intellectual background will be useful.[1] To appreciate what is at stake, consider the esteem we extend to those who know about the nature of things, who understand more fully how things go and what we should do, or who reason more deeply than others. In this sense, to the knowers we grant power. In Western culture, such power was once embedded within religious institutions. With the gradual secularization of society in what we call “the Enlightenment” trust in religious figures as truth bearers began to decline. Within the 20th century, the sciences began to replace religious institutions as the centers of knowledge. With support from a cadre of logical positivist philosophers, a new Cathedral of Truth began to emerge.

The dialogues on social construction have their origins in the moment of doubt. On what grounds can one justify claims to truth, knowledge, or reason? Who can justifiably make such claims? In this sense, one may trace early roots of social construction to such figures as Heraclitus, Vico, Nietzsche, Dewey, and Wittgenstein. All raised a voice of suspicion about transcendent claims to knowledge. More directly

relevant to social construction, scholars often view Berger and Luckmann's 1966 volume, *The social construction of reality* as the landmark work. They spoke of the individual's symbolic universe, or the way we subjectively understand the world. This universe emerges through social interaction, and ultimately we come to see it as objectively true. Yet, because this work was largely uninformed by major movements bursting into the intellectual scene, it was later eclipsed.

The primary intellectual stimulants to recent dialogues issue from at least three, quite independent movements. The convergence of these movements provides the basis for social constructionist inquiry today. The first movement may be viewed as *critical*, and refers to the mounting critique of the unacknowledged ideological saturation of all descriptions and explanations of the world, including those issuing from the empirical sciences. Thus challenged are sciences that claim their knowledge to be value-neutral – true for all people, regardless of religion, politics, or ideology. Such critique can be traced back at least to the Frankfurt School (Tarr, 2011), but today is more fully embodied in the work of Foucault (1980), and associated movements within feminist, black, gay and lesbian, and anti-psychiatry enclaves. The second significant movement, the *literary/rhetorical*, originates in the fields of literary theory and rhetorical study. In these domains, scholars demonstrate the extent to which our theories, explanations and descriptions of the world are not so much dependent upon the world in itself as on discursive conventions (see, for example, Goodman, 1978; McClosky, 1985). Traditions of language-use set the conditions within which all accounts of the world must be lodged. The world in itself makes no demands on which language we select. The third context of ferment, the *social*, may be traced to the collective scholarship in the history of science, the sociology of knowledge, and the social studies of science (see, for example, Kuhn, 1962; Poovey, 1998). Here the major focus is on the social processes giving rise to knowledge claims, both scientific and otherwise. In this context, claims to knowledge are traced to groups of people who collectively try to make sense of the world, given their particular historical and cultural conditions. From this standpoint, it is not the world that dictates our knowledge claims; rather, our knowledge claims fashion what we take the world to be.

These intellectual movements scarcely emerged in a historical vacuum. For one, in the social turmoil of the 60s and 70s, all authority was placed in question. Governments, institutions of justice, corporations, and scientists alike were implicated for their role in economic, racial, and gender oppression, along with the ways in which they contributed to oppressive wars in Southeast Asia. Further, the enormous expansion of communication technologies (e.g. radio, television, cell phones, and later the internet), also brought with them an expanded consciousness of "the other." Increasingly we have been confronted with a teeming array of ideas, innovations, values, and ways of life from

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[1] For more extended discussions see, for example, Gergen (1994, 2015), Lock and Strong (2010), and Holstein and Gubrium (2008).

all corners of the earth. Under these conditions, one can scarcely emerge without a realization of multiple constructions of the real and the good. As Gergen (2001) has proposed, such technologies have sown the seeds for a constructionist orientation in the culture more generally.

This heady mix of ideas, combined with widespread global changes, has enormous and far-reaching implications for scholars and practitioners in education. For, if we approach knowledge as a social construction, a major re-evaluation of our traditions is invited, and a vast range of new possibilities and practices begin to emerge. Let us briefly consider four important conclusions favored by the constructionist dialogues, along with some of their implications for educational policy and practice:

From foundational knowledge to pragmatic and contextually based knowledge

For constructionists, all knowledge claims issue from particular groups, with particular values, at particular times in history. Thus, the question of what should be taught in our educational systems cannot be answered in terms of universal knowledge, that is, "what humans know with certainty about the world." There is no necessary curriculum, for example, of the kind that would justify test comparisons within or across cultures. More important for curricula development are questions of pragmatics. What does a given curriculum enable students to accomplish in the world? And this question cannot be answered outside deliberation on issues of needs, values, and possibilities. What is needed and by whom, whose values are in play, and what are the repercussions for society and the world?

From value-neutral knowledge to critical and appreciative sensitivity

For constructionists, all claims to knowledge carry with them implicit values. Any search "to know" will proceed from a way of life, complete with assumptions about the world, and the values inherent in this way of life. Virtually all the sciences, for example, are lodged in a materialist tradition, and will thus *objectify and valorize* what we take to be phenomena in what we call the material world. Yet, in these normal and quite unremarkable accounts of the world, we also silence the discourse of moral good, of desires, and of the spirit. In this sense, an education that illuminates the "causal relations among material entities" is essentially ideological in its implications. It shapes our understanding in a way that marginalizes or indeed extinguishes alternative constructions. In this context, the constructionist dialogues invite educational policies and practices that are sensitive to "hidden curricula," the unspoken values in the otherwise taken for granted, as formulated by Jackson as early as 1968. Invited is an orientation that permits an appraisal of the implied values and their implications for our lives together. This does not simply mean deliberation on those voices marginalized by all declarations of the real. Invited as well is an exploration of the positive potentials of the values in question.

From knowledge as representation to knowledge as action

Constructionists are highly critical of what is called the picture theory of language, that is, a view that treats language as a vehicle for accurate and objective representing the world. It is this view that underlies the scientific attempt to *test hypotheses* through controlled observation. As it is traditionally reasoned, observations enable the scientist to determine whether a hypothesis is true or false. This approach works as long as one plays a game in which language functions in a pre-established way. If we all agree on the rules of the game of tennis, for example, we can declare with little doubt when a "double fault" has occurred. Outside the game, however, the call of "double fault" not only makes little sense, but its social utility is lost. More compelling for constructionists is Wittgenstein's (1953) view of meaning as dependent on the use of language within ongoing relationships. On this account, language acquires its value through its utility in social affairs. Calling an action a "double fault" in tennis is useful in terms of sustaining the rules that make the game possible. To extend this view into the educational domain, the mastery of textbook knowledge has limited utility, as it is cut away from the "games" in which it has a social function. The invitation, then, is to think of education more in terms of mastering the games as opposed to mastering the abstracted representations. This means a shift from education as knowledge absorption to knowledge making. It is not what you can recite that reveals a good education, but what you can do.

As many find, this emphasis on education as a making is optimally suited to the emerging global conditions of rapid change. The same technologies that generate a consciousness of construction are also responsible for the continuous circulation and accumulation of ideas, perspectives, and innovations. What we take to be knowledge about the world thus expands exponentially, while simultaneously undermining the credibility and often the utility of any taken-for-granted world. In effect, what we take to be *known* is always in motion. The challenge for future educational practices is preparing students for a life of continuous innovation – or knowledge making.

From an individualist to a relational orientation to education

For constructionists, all meaning is born within relational process. This shift from the individual to relational process is of enormous consequence for educational policy and practice. At the outset, extending the preceding discussion, one begins to see knowledge making as an inherently social process. Skills of participation are thus an essential aspect of education. Further, in Western educational systems the traditional emphasis is on educating the individual mind. As a result, teaching practices are aimed at the development of the individual, for example, by private reading, recitation, and homework. And it is the individual who is tested for signs of his or her mastery. However, when relational process is placed in the forefront of concern, a major shift

occurs. One begins to ask how pedagogical practices can become more participatory and collaborative; and to explore alternatives to the evaluation of individuals. “We are simply teaching dependence upon authority, linear thinking, social apathy, passive involvement, and hands-off learning”, says Sirotnik (1983). The emphasis on participatory processes extends as well to teacher training, and indeed to thinking about the well-being of entire educational systems, and the way they function to build meaning and inspire action.

Social Construction in the Educational Context

The preceding outlines but a few of the more important implications of constructionist ideas for education. However, such ideas are scarcely cut away from longstanding deliberations and innovations in the educational sphere. Constructionist ideas are closely allied, for example, with John Dewey’s pragmatist orientation to knowledge. As Dewey (1924) proposed, “There is no such thing as genuine knowledge and fruitful understanding except as the offspring of doing” (p. 321-322). Further, as Dewey proposed, understanding is realized most fully in social participation. In his words, “All education proceeds by the participation of the individual in the social consciousness.” (1987, p. 77). Lev Vygotsky’s (1926, 1978) theories have also played a pivotal role in the constructionist dialogues. His vision of the higher processes of mind as derivatives of social process, along with his emphasis on the role of social interaction in fostering the child’s development, have attracted many engaged in constructionist debates. Among the many theorists and practitioners influenced by Vygotsky’s ideas, Jerome Bruner’s (1996) deliberations on education have been most prominent. Stimulating discussion with constructionist circles is Bruner’s view that learning reaches its full potential from active participation in the culture. Lave and Wenger (1991) have also reflected Vygotsky’s views in their emphasis on how apprentices learn through their participation in a *community of practice*. Wenger has gone on to expand on the latter concept in emphasizing the way in which participation gives rise to identity, inspires dedication, and gives meaning to one’s actions (Wenger et al, 2002). Collaborative learning, and the closely related cooperative learning, have redefined the traditional student-teacher relationship and have opened up new methodologies where learners engage actively in a group process. Such an orientation not only enhances the educational process but also befits the new workplace that has replaced hierarchical structures with horizontal relations of teamwork.

At this juncture, it is important to point out in this context a distinction traditionally made between *constructivism* and *social constructionism* (Steffe and Gale, 1995). Like social constructionists, the constructivists –often identified with theorists such as Piaget and Inhelder (1969) and Kelley (1955)– emphasize the way in which people construct their realities. However, for constructivists the site of construction is the individual mind. In effect, constructivism is strongly psychological, and in terms of education, is child centered. In contrast, social constructionists view the site of reality

making within social process. In this sense, constructionism is neither child centered nor curriculum centered, but is relational. Relational process is at the center of effective education. Now, both the traditions of Dewey and Vygotsky do speak of mental process, but view this process as closely tied to the social surrounds. One might say, "mind within society." Often this orientation is thus called social constructivism. The kinds of practices emphasized by *social constructivists* are very similar – sometimes identical – with those of constructionists.

As constructionist ideas have entered increasingly into various educational communities, new and far-reaching developments have occurred. There is first the explosion of postmodern thought into the educational sphere. Postmodern scholarship feeds from much the same intellectual sources as those of social construction, but provides a more sweeping critique of the modernist cultural context giving rise to the metaphor of education as a machine. Important for constructionists, then, are not only the more general treatises on education in a postmodern vein (Usher and Edwards, 1994). There is also the development of quite specific movements. For example, drawing inspiration from Paulo Freire's (1968/1970) early critique of the subjugating impact of traditional education, a vital movement of critical education scholarship has emerged (see, for example, Lather, 1991; Giroux, 2011, 2014). Here scholars have illuminated the various racial, gender, ethnic, and economic class biases that pervade the traditional curriculum and pedagogical practices. Recommended are pedagogies fostering *critical literacy* (Banks, 1996) whereby facts, concepts, paradigms, and explanations challenge mainstream knowledge and expand on established canons in such a way that there is a full flowering of the multiple cultures in society. In a similar vein, Cummins (2004) has described the way culturally diverse students are required to acquiesce to the perspectives of the dominant group. He calls for their empowerment through processes of *collaborative relations of power* (also see Chapter 2). Also emerging within the postmodern arena is the narrative movement. The use of narrative essays, in which students speak in their own language about their experiences, allows them to validate their traditions and identity (Phillion, Ming Fang He, and Connelly, 2005). Others have used narrative as a learning practice, based on the realization that there is more engagement and drama in narrative as opposed to didactic pedagogy (Rossiter and Clark, 2007).

Constructionist dialogues have also been partisan to developments in educational research. At the outset, the dialogues played an important role in legitimating qualitative methods of inquiry. This is so, in part, because the more traditional methods of research – emphasizing experimentation and statistics – were both cumbersome and ineffectual in many spheres of educational inquiry. For constructionists there are no foundational warrants for such methods; they are simply a collection of practices that lead to certain kinds of descriptions and explanations, and not others. In this context, qualitative approaches are enormously helpful, for example, in fostering participant observation, in-

depth interviewing, and action research. A summary of much constructionist allied research in education has been provided by Wortham and Jackson (2008). However among the forms of inquiry often championed by constructionists are narrative research (Casey, 1995; Mertier, 2013), discourse analysis (Rogers, 2004), and action research (Noffke and Stevenson, 1995). Both narrative and discourse studies fall naturally into constructionist concerns, as they emphasize the many ways in which realities are constructed in language. Action research is favored by many constructionists, as it avoids altogether the problem of using research to "tell the truth" about the nature of the world. An excellent example of the kind of action research championed by constructionists is furnished by Rogoff, Turkanis, and Bartlett (2001). In an elementary school setting, they brought together students, teachers, and adults from the extended community. As they reasoned, learning occurs most effectively through the engaged participation of learners together. Thus, teachers joined with both parents and even the youngest students to plan the curriculum and classroom activities. Parents served periodically as co-teachers; students from different grades were brought together for co-learning sessions. The result was the successful creation of a broad community of learners.

Dialogues between practice invested theorists and theoretically oriented practitioners have also brought forth a rich range of outcomes. Thus, for example, in thinking through issues of multiple literacies and their various uses, James Gee (1990) had made a strong case for viewing reading and writing as social – as opposed to mental – actions. This work later gave rise to Gee's (2008) exploration of videogame skills as a form of literacy. Scholars such as Bruffee (1993) and Kafai and Resnick (1996) also made early strides in wedding theoretical scholarship to pedagogical practices, practices that especially favored dialogue and collaboration. For example, Cope and Kalantzis (2013) have introduced the use of computing devices in collaborative environments where the relative contributions of different learners can be traced, while the whole jointly constructed product can be appreciated as greater than the sum of individual contributions (also see Chapter 21). In their work Hersted and Gergen (2013) advance the use of dialogue to enhance skills for participating in dialogic processes themselves.

The implications of such work are well illustrated in the present volume. However, the reader may find especially challenging the work of Davies and Gannon (2009) and their colleagues, as they introduce pedagogical practices of collective biography and relational art. In their eighteen year long intervention in the education of a territorial minority in Greece, Dragonas and Frangoudaki (2014) orchestrated collaborative interactions with students, teachers and the entire community, thus transforming structures and practices. In his recent work in Suriname, Schoenmakers (2014) also demonstrates ways in which relational practices can transform an entire educational system. Sax (2008) has extended the emphasis on collaboration to "re-author" teaching in on-line education. Appreciative Inquiry (AI), as a constructionist practice for bringing about organizational change, has made a significant impact on

educational practitioners. The AI emphasis on replacing “problem talk” with appreciative dialogue is especially inviting to many educators. Dole, Godwin and Moehle (2014) provide a substantial anthology of positive transformations in schools around the world. Preskill and Catsambas (2006) have developed an appreciative orientation to evaluating both student and educational systems performance. In each case, the emphasis is on building the future through focusing on what is valued as opposed to what is wrong. Winslade and Williams (2012) extend constructionist ideas into practices for addressing conflict and eliminating violence in schools. And in their recent writings, Haslebo and Lund (2014, 2015) reach across a wide range of practices for not only building positive relationships in schools, but indeed moving entire school cultures in a collaborative direction.

The Present Volume

Drawing from this rich array of ideas and practices, the present volume adds both detail and dimension to what has proceeded. At the outset, our attempt is to showcase work from a variety of different cultural settings. This not only demonstrates how constructionist initiatives in education can be successfully shared across national boundaries. More important, we come to see how ideas and practices can be re-formed as they shift from one cultural context to another. Social constructionist logics do not demand regimentation and restriction; rather, they invite continuous emergence. Thus, we include 20 contributions in this volume from 12 countries across four continents, with each contribution carrying its own special qualities and creativity. Nevertheless, as editors we remain apologetic. There is so much more that could have been added, and all too many omissions. We can only hope that the process of sharing can continue through many different channels. We have also divided the contributions into four sections, including theory, practice, systems change, and research and evaluation. In many respects the organization is arbitrary. Constructionism does not, for example, make a clean separation between theory and practice. Theory is itself a practice, and all practice carries with it often unspoken conceptual assumptions. Further, changes in micro-practices (for example, classroom pedagogy) are not fundamentally distinct from system change. Thus, while this sectioning may successfully prevent reader vertigo, the adventurous reader will find it useful to explore the whole of which the various chapters represent faceted reflections.

Section I of the volume is thus composed of four contributions to constructionist theory in education. The initial chapters in this section both draw from the critical tradition in education, and link their particular concerns to the constructionist dialogues. In Chapter 1, Jim Cummins draws from the French educational context to critically analyze the political discourse around multi-culturalism, immigration, and educational effectiveness, along with the processes of identity recognition in school curricula. As he sees it, these combined influences generate the kind of hostility ultimately realized in the

slaughter of the *Charlie Hebdo* journalists. Cummins proposes specific practices that would reduce alienation by enabling culturally marginalized students to engage positively with the curriculum. Especially emphasized are practices of "collaborative power," essentially fostering "identities of competence" among first and second-generation immigrant students.

Tim Corcoran and Tom Billington (Chapter 2) extend the dialogues in critical education, to place in focus what they see as the ideological and political socialization of all educational policies and practices. They trouble over the impact of the current industrial, mechanistic, and individualist policies and practices that now govern Western education. As they reason, if education is inherently a means of generating our forms of life, then ideological issues should not be hidden, as in the present context, but should be central to our forms of education. We should take responsibility for the ethical, moral and political nature of our discourse and relationships. In this respect, they propose that educational ontologies and epistemologies should be driven by the pursuit of psychosocial justice, thus contributing to the wellness of the human condition.

In his chapter (3), Kenneth Gergen advocates a fundamental shift in our conception of knowledge, from a traditional view of knowledge as carried by fixed representations of the world to knowledge as embedded in ongoing, relational practice. As he proposes, knowledge in this sense is not located in any place, such as individual minds, books, or computer files. Rather, knowledge is continuously realized in the active social process of making, or what he calls *relational praxis*. This view is linked not only to constructionist ideas but as well their emphasis on pragmatic utility. As Gergen proposes, such an orientation to knowledge is maximally congenial with the increasingly rapid tempo of global life, and its demands for adjustment and innovation. Promising pedagogical initiatives are also proposed.

Echoing issues central to the preceding chapter, Gordon Wells (Chapter 4) makes a case for the foundational role played by dialogue in the creation of knowledge and its powerful potentials in the educational process. Inspired by Vygotskian views of human development through collaboration, Wells argues that the top-down, standardization of school curricula constrains the kind of instructional conversation through which education most effectively proceeds. This view is supported by Wells' extensive research on classroom dialogue. The chapter goes on to formulate the classroom conditions favoring the emergence of productive dialogue, how dialogue may be facilitated through computer-based interchange, and how dialogic pedagogy may be continuously improved over time.

In **Section II**, the offerings focus on education practices. Specifically, these chapters address ways in which educators, consultants, students, and parents create learning environments as well as projects and activities emphasizing collaborative knowledge creation. Each chapter introduces the authors' attempts to transform traditional educational habits into collaborative and engaging forms of practice. The

chapters are particularly inspiring as they show us that it is possible, in very traditional educational contexts, to introduce participatory and creative forms of learning. We begin in Chapter 5 with Bjorn Hauger and Ingebjorg Maeland's account of their strikingly successful practices for working with adolescent school drop-outs in Norway. With the use of a collection of creative practices – a Tree Method for the student's planning his or her future, Strength cards that encourage students to share their positive views of each other, and a Road Map for achieving specific goals - the school succeeds in motivating otherwise "youth at risk" to regain direction and enthusiasm in building their future.

In Chapter 6 Mary Gergen offers an innovative framing of the classic "introductory" university course. She aptly points out that most introductory courses are designed to present the subject matter as coherent and "scientifically true" while simultaneously bringing students on a journey through radically different – and frequently oppositional – theoretical positions. She uses the introductory psychology course as her illustration. Gergen notes that professors teaching these courses must often "pretend" that the disparate views of psychology are all "foundational" to the discipline and thereby present no obvious dilemma about psychology. To avoid this, she proposes that professors treat each theory as another way of talking. She discusses the innovative assignments and activities in which she has students engage, all illustrating how each psychological theory offers a way of explaining human behavior. If each offers a construction of the world, the question that follows should not be "which one is correct" but "which one is useful in a given situation." This chapter is valuable for those who feel trapped teaching these survey-based introductory courses and Gergen's innovative assignments and activities provide exciting ways to teach these, sometimes unpopular, introductory courses.

The following chapter (7) by Anne Morrison and Kristen Chorba presents the unfolding history of a peer mentoring project and the development of a course in Relational Learning in Education. They chronicle the evolution of a truly collaborative form of learning, one where students take on the task of working with new students. In so doing, and with the use of Tom Andersen's reflecting process, a collaborative learning community is developed. From this peer mentoring project emerges a course in "relational learning" where students come to understand in action the significance of relationships and relational processes in education. In Chapter 8 Charru Sharma shares her work in creative drama to ignite children's learning. She calls this "joyful learning" – an inspiring image! She notes that traditional Indian education is focused on the teacher's transmission of information to the students rather than on collaborative and creative modes of learning. She also describes her research with third grade children in India, suggesting that over the course of two and a half years, creative drama, as a process-centered experience, enhances both the cognitive and social development of children. This chapter offers support for the creative development of relational practices in the classroom.

Bullying has become a widespread problem in schools. Two chapters treat bullying from a constructionist perspective. In her chapter (9), Sylvia London describes a training program for teachers and school administrators for purposes of creating a generative school environment for effectively addressing bullying. The attempt was to help professionals create the kind of conversations and relationships that would invite all the participants in the educational community (teachers, parents, students and all school personnel) into mutually appreciative dialogue. By all accounts, this ten-month program proved highly successful. In the following chapter (10), Gita Haslebo and Gro Lund approach the topic of bullying by pointing out the individualist assumptions surrounding the understanding and treatment of bullying. Based on these assumptions, the job of teachers and school personnel is to protect the "victim" and punish the bully. Haselbo and Lund propose a relational alternative. Here the challenge for teachers is to listen and understand the different sense-making contexts relevant to bullying, and to search for generative re-framings. The authors illustrate how appreciative and supportive communication patterns can be developed.

Contributions in **Section III** explore educational interventions that aim at whole-system transformations in educational communities around the world. Key themes in all five chapters include the power of dialogical and collaborative practices; the engagement of students, teachers and the entire community in the process by which knowledge is created and utilized; the shift from the individual to collaborative learning; the building of relational trust; the disturbance of existing patterns of interaction so as to allow the emergence of new, more complex ones; and a critique of those educational structures that have traditionally disempowered students.

Thus, in Chapter 11 Anni Vassiliou and Thalia Dragonas describe the development of *Creative Youth Workshops,* framed within a program for enhancing the education of Muslim minority children in Thrace, Greece. For 13 years these workshops have brought together children, adolescents and young adults across various divides of the Thracian society –minority/majority, Christian Orthodox/Muslim, rural/urban. They have provided a long-lasting journey in jointly constructing alternative, positive possibilities of living together in a conflict-ridden social environment. They represent an exciting partnership between a community of youth workers, youths and their families, along with enhancing personal and interpersonal skills involved in community building.

In the following chapter (12) Loek Schoenmakers describes an effort to generate primary education reform in the Republic of Suriname. Central to the effort was the creation of a publication that could reflect Suriname's own shared vision of education. Rather than depending on the claims of *a priori* experts, multiple voices from all sectors shared stories of positive experiences in education. The resulting publication was disseminated to ten thousand educational professionals, and sparked a nationwide conversation that led to long-term changes in primary education.

The next two chapters extend the implications of Appreciative Inquiry, by drawing from its assumption for purposes of innovation. Xinping Zhang describes in Chapter 13 an educational intervention in which the concepts of Appreciative Inquiry and Appreciative Leadership were applied to primary and secondary schools in the Jiangsu Province of China. Working with school principals, a collaborative leadership model was designed for strengthening the interaction within the school and cooperation between the school and the community. Collaborative dialogical practices were instigated to facilitate each department's ability to govern and plan for itself, while cultivating an inclusive atmosphere. Teachers were also given the opportunity to present and share their work along appreciative principles.

In Chapter 14 Susan Riva presents a case study illustrating how constructionist ideas invite the development of innovative methods for improving the wellbeing of disabled children in a Swiss day-care center. Responding to a relational crisis among teachers, therapists, and parents, Riva adopted a multi-level strategy, including conflict resolution practices, enhanced collaborative skills, and the integration of traditionally unheard voices into social and healthcare narratives. The result was a shared vision of institutional roles and practices, and a legacy of inclusive practices.

Section IV includes contributions introducing a constructionist perspective in educational research and evaluation. The section begins with three papers that feature developments in educational research. Eleftheria Tseliou (Chapter 15) begins by introducing discourse analysis as a central constructionist research methodology. If it is largely through language that we construct the world, then discursive practices in educational settings should be of focal significance. She presents an overview of the "colorful landscape" of the diverse and multi-disciplinary discourse analysis approaches, coupled with examples from educational research studies. She argues that discourse analysis can promote dialogic, contextually sensitive and critical perspectives in educational research. In Chapter 16, Rebecca Webb describes a discourse study from an English primary school. Webb's analysis highlights how the discourse of human rights exemplifies the ways in which the '3-R's' - namely, rights, respect, and responsibility - are both institutionally constructed and performed in the context of everyday educational practices. Like many of the contributors to this book, she highlights the inherently political aspect of educational processes. In Chapter 17, Aitor Gómez expands the range of inquiry to include action research. He introduces a dialogic approach to research and evaluation he calls the Communicative Methodology of Research (CMR). This approach promotes collaborative practices with research participants who are invited to participate throughout all of the phases of a research project. A case study is presented, which took place at a school setting in a deprived area in Spain. A community participatory evaluation following the premises of CMR lead to transformative effects.

The remaining chapters are concerned with performance evaluation in education. The chapters treat the problems of traditional evaluation, and the possibilities for

alternatives more congenial with constructionist ideas. A strong critique of performance evaluation in k-12 has been offered by Gergen and Dixon-Roman (2014). In Chapter 18, Peter Dahler-Larsen continues the critique of evaluation from a constructionist perspective, and argues for more collaborative and participatory forms of practice. He narrates wide-ranging examples from his personal experience in the context of higher education. Then, resonating with many of Dahler-Larsen's concerns, Sheila McNamee (Chapter 19) also argues for replacing traditional practices of student evaluation/assessment with collaborative and participatory processes. To support her vision of 'relational evaluation,' she includes vivid examples from the university context. Finally, Bill Cope and Mary Kalantzis (Chapter 20) discuss the role that computer mediated technologies can play in the educational "assessment of evidence of learning." They emphasize the transformative pedagogical potential for social as opposed to individual learning, and outline the possibilities and practices for pedagogy in which students are engaged as "creators of knowledge."

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Section I
Constructionist Theory in Education

The Social Construction of Identities Reflections on 21st Century Education in Light of the *Charlie Hebdo* Slaughter

Jim Cummins

Just before noon on Wednesday January 7 2015, two masked men armed with automatic rifles entered the offices of the weekly satirical newspaper *Charlie Hebdo* in central Paris and gunned down newspaper staff and police officers, killing twelve and wounding many more. Several more innocent people would die in subsequent days before the two gunmen and an accomplice who took hostages in a Jewish supermarket were killed by police. The three attackers were of Algerian ethnic origin and were born and educated in France.

These horrific events, together with similarly motivated attacks in other countries (e.g., Belgium, Canada, the Netherlands, Spain, and the United Kingdom [UK]), have unfolded in the wake of the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, and the subsequent 'war on terror' initiated by the United States. They provide a frame for the issues I will consider in this paper, the central ones being (a) the extent to which educational systems in western countries may have indirectly contributed to the alienation and radicalization of youth from socially marginalized groups and (b) the extent to which alternative educational orientations that prioritize the ways in which identities are negotiated within schools might increase the identification of marginalized youth with the broader society.

I will initially sketch aspects of the French educational context to illustrate some general patterns in the ways that many European countries orient themselves to diversity among their school populations. I will then examine some of the broader societal discourses relating to constructs such as 'multiculturalism' and 'immigration' that reflect the emergence and consolidation of 'us versus them' perspectives in relation to so-called 'immigrants', many of whom have lived in European countries over several generations. I will then broaden the analysis to the more general international discourse on 'educational effectiveness', which has been choreographed by the Organization for Economic and Cultural Development (OECD) in its Programme for International Student Achievement (PISA), in order to draw attention to the absence of any consideration of issues related to societal power relations and teacher-student identity negotiation in these 'evidence-based' attempts to improve global educational performance. Finally, I will present a

framework focused on understanding causes of underachievement among marginalized group students and ways of reversing this process that incorporates as central components societal power relations and their reflection in patterns of identity negotiation within schools.

The overall argument is that schools can increase the probability that youth from marginalized groups will engage in a positive way with the broader society if they focus on promoting 'identities of competence' (Manyak, 2004) among these students. This educational orientation may require teachers to actively challenge, through their pedagogical practice, patterns of coercive power relations in the wider society. It may also entail the development of school-based policies in relation to language, culture, and literacy that are at variance with those implied by top-down mandates from school boards or Ministries of Education.

Diversity in French and European Educational Contexts

Hélot and Young (2006) provide a succinct account of the orientation to linguistic and cultural diversity characteristic of the French educational system. They note that the French educational system is very centralized and hierarchical with essentially the same curriculum implemented in all classrooms, including those in French territories overseas. They point out that while teachers do have pedagogical freedom in their classrooms, the very ambitious curriculum leaves little room for innovation: "Most teachers are used to implementing top-down policies since they work under the authority of inspectors whose job it is to make sure such policies are put into practice" (p. 72). Although official documents endorse integration of minorities, actual practice in schools has focused on assimilation with minimal acknowledgement of students' home language, culture and religion. Hélot and Young argue that there has been very little interest among policy-makers and most educators in positioning students' multilingualism and multiculturalism as an asset rather than as a handicap and they highlight "the refusal to take stock of the very real problems of discrimination and racism toward certain sectors of the population" (p. 73). One illustration is the fact that third-generation immigrant children are still often referred to as 'children of foreign origin' despite the fact that many of them were born in France and hold French nationality.

This educational orientation to diversity is not by any means unique to France. Many European (and other) countries similarly perceive the linguistic and cultural diversity represented by immigrant students as a problem to be overcome rather than as a potential educational resource (see Ruiz, 1984, for a discussion of this distinction).

If one of the major goals of educational policies is to reduce underachievement among low-socioeconomic status (SES) immigrant-background students, then the 'problem-oriented' policies implemented in most European countries are clearly not working. The sampling of PISA data for reading achievement among 15-year-old

students presented in Table 1 shows that although the underachievement of immigrant-background students in France is significant, several European countries fare worse.

Christensen and Steglitz (2008) highlight as particularly problematic the poor performance of second-generation students in many European countries: "Of particular concern, especially for policy-makers, should be the fact that second-generation immigrant students in many countries continue to lag significantly behind their native peers despite spending all of their schooling in the receiving country" (p. 18). In some cases (Denmark and Germany in 2003; Austria and Germany in 2006) second generation students who received all their schooling in the host country performed more poorly than first generation students who arrived as newcomers and would likely have had less time and opportunity to learn the host country language. These data clearly suggest that factors other than simply opportunity to learn the host country language are operating to limit achievement among second-generation students in these countries.

	PISA 2003 Gen 1	**PISA 2003 Gen 2**	**PISA 2006 Gen 1**	**PISA 2006 Gen 2**
Australia	-12	-4	+1	+7
Austria	-77	-73	-48	-79
Belgium	-117	-84	-102	-81
Canada	-19	+10	-19	0
Denmark	-42	-57	-79	-64
France	-79	-48	-45	-36
Germany	-86	-96	-70	-83
Netherlands	-61	-50	-65	-61
Norway	-68	-59	-63	-42
Sweden	-89	-20	-68	-29
Switzerland	-93	-53	-85	-48
United Kingdom			-44	-7
United States	-50	-22		

Table 1. *PISA Reading scores 2003 and 2006 (based on data presented in Christensen and Steglitz, 2008); Gen 1 = first generation students, Gen 2 = second generation students; negative scores indicate performance below country mean, positive scores indicate performance above country mean); 100 points represents one standard deviation.*

Students' performance tends to be better in countries such as Canada and Australia that have encouraged immigration during the past 40 years and that have a coherent infrastructure designed to integrate immigrants into the society (e.g. free adult language classes, language support services for students in schools, rapid qualification for full citizenship, etc.). Additionally, both Canada and Australia have explicitly endorsed multicultural philosophies at the national level aimed at promoting respect across

communities and expediting the integration of newcomers into the broader society. In Canada (2003 assessment) and Australia (2006 assessment), second-generation students performed slightly *better* academically than native speakers of the school language. By contrast, second generation students tend to perform very poorly in countries that have been characterized by highly negative attitudes towards immigrants (e.g., Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, France). Some of the positive results for Australia and Canada can be attributed to selective immigration that favours immigrants with strong educational qualifications. In both countries, the educational attainments of adult immigrants are as high, on average, as those of the general population.

The overall picture for many European countries that emerges from the PISA data is that second generation students who have experienced all their socialization in the host country do not perform much better than first generation students who may have had significantly less exposure to the host country language and culture. Clearly, despite full access to state-provided educational opportunities, many immigrant-background students are not succeeding academically. Students who drop out of school with minimal qualifications and few job prospects represent fertile ground for recruitment to identity-affirming roles in a global jihadist movement that highlights its goal of pursuing divinely ordained justice and righteousness.

Commenting on the *Charlie Hebdo* attack, Canadian researchers Amarasingam Amaranth and Rachel Brown (2015) point to issues of alienation and belonging as central to understanding the attraction of the global jihadist movement for marginalized youth. Muslims in France are estimated to grow to about 10 percent of the population by 2030. They are mainly of Algerian ethnic origin and along with other immigrant-background groups in France, they struggle with high unemployment as well as housing and ghettoization issues. In a context of French nationalism, Amarasingam and Brown point out that the only identity that is important in France is the national one, and other identities, particularly religious ones, which may interfere with full assimilation, are seen as problematic. The focus on assimilation within the schools and the consequent explicit or implicit devaluation of the language, culture and religion of the home leaves many young people without strong roots in either culture:

> *Many of these youth feel increasingly alienated from French society as well as the ethnic and cultural heritage of their parents. They are nowhere at home. The only identity that they feel they can have an unnegotiated connection with is their religious one. If they cannot be a French or Algerian Muslim, they will simply be Muslim.*
>
> *While simplistic connections cannot be drawn here, it should be noted that this is precisely the same narrative marshalled by jihadist movements like Al Qaeda or the Islamic State--that one's identity as a Muslim is primary, and that Islamic identity becomes increasingly impure the more it is coloured by ethnic and cultural trappings. The narrative of the global jihadist movement, as a transnational brotherhood, has acceptance and belonging built right into it.*
>
> *We can choose, then, to understand the events in Paris this week, and future events to be sure, as the actions of crazy Muslims who can't take a joke. Or we can*

> *choose to look deeper and understand the ways in which Muslim youth in France, and indeed Europe, are struggling with issues of integration and belonging, and simultaneously trying to find their footing within the 'old' ethno-cultural demands of their parents, the 'new' civic and national demands of French society, and the ever-shifting religious dynamics and political reality of the global Muslim community. In other words, it's about more than just cartoons.*[1]

In recent years, anti-immigrant sentiment in the wider society has been fueled by national leaders who attribute the lack of integration of some minority groups to policies of 'multiculturalism', which they interpret as encouraging immigrants to remain enclosed in ethnic enclaves without making any attempt to integrate into the wider society. Like Amarasingam and Brown (2015), these national leaders position 'identity' as a central construct in understanding societal divisions related to ethnicity, but they attribute these divisions to the unwillingness of ethnic groups to assimilate into the 'mainstream' society. Some examples of this discourse are examined in the next section.

'Multiculturalism' as Scapegoat: Dueling Discourses on Diversity

In a speech in Potsdam, Germany, on October 17, 2010, German Chancellor Angela Merkel was the first of numerous European leaders to question the legitimacy of a multicultural approach to creating societal cohesion, saying that '*multikulti*' has utterly failed. As reported by *The Guardian* newspaper, Merkel said the idea of people from different cultural backgrounds living happily side by side did not work and the onus was on immigrants to do more to integrate into German society.[2] However, as Piller (2010) points out, there is nothing new in her declaration as "Germany has never had a policy of multiculturalism and the idea continues to be that migrants integrate into a dominant German culture". Piller also notes that in the same speech, Merkel said that Islam is now part of Germany just like Christianity and Judaism and she accepted diversity and particularly Muslims as a legitimate part of the imagined German nation.[3]

Despite the nuances in Merkel's speech, the dominant headline in the global press was that 'multiculturalism' and the unwillingness of immigrants to integrate were at the root of the social rifts in German society. A few months later (5 February, 2011), British prime minister David Cameron attributed the radicalization of Islamic youth to 'the doctrine of state multiculturalism', which has "encouraged different cultures to live separate lives, apart from each other and the mainstream". He argued that young Muslim men find it hard to identify with Britain, "because we have allowed the weakening of our collective identity" and "have failed to provide a vision of society to which they feel they want to belong". Like Merkel, Cameron's message was nuanced, arguing for the building

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[1] http://www.thestar.com/opinion/commentary/2015/01/10/charlie_hebdo_attacks_not_just_about_cartoons.html#

[2] http://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/oct/17/angela-merkel-german-multiculturalism-failed

[3] http://www.languageonthemove.com/language-globalization/what-did-angela-merkel-really-say

of “stronger pride in local identity so people feel free to say yes, I am a Muslim, I am a Hindu, I am Christian but I am also a Londoner or a Berliner, too”. He argued that identity, “that feeling of belonging in our countries … is the key to achieving true cohesion”.[4]

A few days later, French President Nicolas Sarkozy joined the chorus by declaring that the policy of encouraging the religious and cultural differences of immigrants was a failure: “'Of course we must all respect differences, but we do not want a society where communities coexist side by side. If you come to France, you accept to melt into a single community, which is the national community, and if you do not want to accept that, you cannot be welcome in France”.[5]

This collective discourse is remarkable in appropriating the term ‘multiculturalism’ to represent mythical state policies that encouraged immigrant communities to remain by their own volition outside the mainstream society. There is no acknowledgement of widespread housing segregation, job discrimination, and widespread school failure (particularly in Germany and France) as contributors to societal exclusion. Minority groups are solely responsible for their own failure to integrate. ‘Multiculturalism’ is code for ‘being soft of immigrants’ and the consequent solution is therefore to ‘get tough’ and force them to assimilate. The implicit wish is that assimilation will cause them to ‘disappear’, thereby removing the problem they represent for society. Clearly, these assimilation-oriented sentiments are unlikely to endorse attempts by schools to enable students to take pride in and maintain access to their home languages and cultures.

Despite the rhetoric of integration and assimilation, the societal *modus operandi* in relation to racialized groups has been one of segregation and exclusion. In this respect, the current European situation is analogous to the long history of racism in the United States where ‘melting pot’ rhetoric obscured the ugly reality that there was no inclination to let African-American or Latino/Latina communities anywhere near the melting pot. Assimilation was envisaged for European immigrants but not for racialized communities. This reality was eloquently expressed in an essay by Isidro Lucas (1981) entitled ‘Bilingual Education and the Melting Pot: Getting Burned’:

> *There is in America a profound, underground culture, that of the unmeltable populations. Blacks have proven unmeltable over the years. The only place allowed them near the melting pot was underneath it. Getting burned. Hispanics were also left out of the melting pot. Spanish has been historically preserved more among them than other languages in non-English-speaking populations. It was a shelter, a defense.* (p. 21-22)

The reality of discrimination against Muslims in many parts of Europe (and elsewhere) is illustrated in a carefully controlled study carried out by Adida, Laitin, & Valfort (2010). They reported that a Muslim job candidate in France is 2.5 times less likely to receive a job interview callback than his or her Christian counterpart. The study

[4] http://www.newstatesman.com/blogs/the-staggers/2011/02/terrorism-islam-ideology

controlled for potentially confounding factors, such as race and country of origin showing that discrimination based on religious affiliation exists independently of other sources of discrimination.

In summary, the discourse that calls on Muslims and other minority groups to make greater efforts to assimilate into the mainstream society is hypocritical insofar as it refuses to acknowledge the institutional and attitudinal barriers within the mainstream society that block such assimilation. An 'either-or' choice is offered to immigrant communities—either you repudiate the religious, cultural and linguistic affiliations that distinguish you from members of the mainstream society or "you cannot be welcome in France", to quote Nicolas Sarkozy. Discrimination based on 'racial' markers (which are difficult to hide) may still exist even for those who do attempt to assimilate in other ways.

Countries such as Australia and Canada, which adopted official national policies of multiculturalism in the 1970s, have experienced less turmoil in relation to immigration and diversity than many European countries. Although not without ambiguities, inconsistencies, and ongoing discrimination based on race, religion and language, these policies promoted a 'both-and' orientation to diversity that focused on lowering barriers to full societal participation without demanding abandonment of religious, cultural, or linguistic identities as the price of admission. As outlined in Table 1, academic achievement of immigrant-background students has tended to be considerably higher in these countries than in many European countries.

What implications does this analysis have for educational provision in diverse societies? The link between academic achievement and societal participation is obvious—students who drop out of school with minimal qualifications will operate on the economic fringes of society and are thus much less likely to identify with the broader society than those whose academic qualifications open doors to social and economic advancement. A first step in exploring these issues is to examine the research evidence regarding causes of underachievement among immigrant-background, low-SES, and marginalized group students.

Causes of Underachievement among Marginalized Group Students

The PISA data collected in successive OECD studies over the past 15+ years provides extremely valuable data on broad patterns of achievement in different countries and among different social groups. The PISA studies have also identified the potentially causal role of several variables. For example, the OECD (2010a) reports that the SES of individual students exerted a highly significant effect on achievement in the PISA studies: "On average across OECD countries, 14% of the differences in student reading performance within each country is associated with differences in students' socio-

[5] http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1355961/Nicolas-Sarkozy-joins-David-Cameron-Angela-Merkel-view-multiculturalism-failed.html#ixzz3OcbRgEqa

economic background" (OECD, 2010a, p. 14). However, this report noted that the effect of the school's economic, social and cultural status on students' performance is much stronger than the effects of the individual student's socio-economic background. In other words, when students from low-SES backgrounds attend schools with a socio-economically advantaged intake, they tend to perform significantly better than when they attend schools with a socio-economically disadvantaged intake. This difference between the SES of individual students and the collective SES of students within particular schools highlights the effects of housing (and consequent educational) segregation on patterns of school achievement. The Charlie Hebdo attackers grew up in precisely this kind of socially and educationally segregated environment.

Another important finding that has emerged from several of the PISA studies concerns the role of reading engagement in determining reading achievement among 15-year olds. The 2000 PISA study (OECD, 2004) reported that the level of a student's reading engagement was a better predictor of reading performance than his or her SES. In more recent PISA studies, the OECD (2010b) reported that approximately one-third of the association between reading performance and students' SES was mediated by reading engagement. The implication is that schools can potentially 'push back' about one-third of the negative effects of socioeconomic disadvantage by ensuring that students have access to a rich print environment and become actively engaged with literacy. The credibility of this inference is supported by considerable data showing that many low-SES students experience limited access to print in their homes, neighborhoods and schools (Duke, 2000; Neuman & Celano, 2001). The *causal* link between print access/literacy engagement and reading attainment has been demonstrated in numerous research studies (e.g., Elley & Mangubhai, 1983; Lindsay, 2010; Sullivan & Brown, 2013).

Despite the valuable contributions that the PISA research has made to social and educational policy considerations, some PISA researchers have made highly problematic interpretations of the research relating to immigrant-background students' emerging bilingualism (Christensen & Stanat, 2007; Nusche, 2009; Stanat & Christensen, 2006). As pointed out in the following sections, these interpretations reinforce an assimilationist ideology of attributing the academic difficulties of immigrant-background youth to family characteristics and choices, thereby deflecting responsibility from the educational system and the choices implied by its structures and practices.

What does PISA say about students' L1?

The PISA research showed that in both mathematics and reading, first and second generation immigrant-background students who spoke their L1 at home were significantly behind their peers who spoke the school language at home. Christensen and Stanat (2007) concluded: "These large differences in performance suggest that students

have insufficient opportunities to learn the language of instruction" (p. 3). German sociologist Hartmut Esser (2006) similarly argued on the basis of PISA data that "the use of the native language in the family context has a (clearly) negative effect" (p. 64). He further argued that retention of the home language by immigrant children will reduce both motivation and success in learning the host country language (2006, p. 34). These researchers endorse policies that would immerse immigrant-background children in the societal language from age 3, thereby increasing opportunities to learn that language (and, by the same token, reducing exposure to L1 and its associated 'negative effects'). Consistent with this position, both Christensen and Stanat, and Esser, claim that there is little evidence that bilingual education is a credible option for increasing immigrant-background students' academic achievement.

In short, these researchers' promotion of immersion in the language of the host country as the most appropriate policy option derives from the following interpretation of the PISA data: *Inadequate proficiency in the school language and academic underachievement are partially caused by insufficient opportunity to learn the school language as a result of speaking a minority language at home.*

There are some obvious problems with this interpretation. First, in arguing that speaking a minority language at home contributes to immigrant students' academic difficulties, both Esser (2006) and Christensen and Stanat (2007) inappropriately move from a language of *association* to a language of *causation*, ignoring the multiple factors that mediate these relationships.

Second, even if there were a causal relationship between language use at home and achievement, the direction of this causal relationship is not clear. It may be that students who are more successful in acquiring the school language are more likely to use that language in the home. In this case, the causal direction is from success in school language acquisition to school language use at home. In other words, it is just as plausible to argue that the negative correlation between home language use and school achievement reflects the possibility that learners who acquire the school language more rapidly switch to that language in the home as it is to argue that L1 use in the home results in poor school achievement.

Finally, no relationship was found between home language use and achievement in the two countries where immigrant students were most successful (Australia and Canada) and the relationship disappeared for a large majority (10 out of 14) of OECD-member countries when socioeconomic status and other background variables were controlled (Stanat & Christensen, 2006, Table 3.5, pp. 200-202). The disappearance of the relationship in a large majority of countries suggests that language spoken at home does not exert any independent effect on achievement but is rather a proxy for variables such as SES and length of residence in the host country.

In order to make a case that L1 use at home exerts an independent (negative) causal impact on school achievement, researchers would have to explain why no such causal

effect appears in immigrant-welcoming countries such as Australia and Canada and why the relationship disappears in most countries when other background variables are taken into account. When researchers and/or policy-makers draw causal inferences on the basis of correlational relationships among variables without simultaneously examining counter-evidence that might refute these inferences, it is legitimate to explore the extent to which ideological considerations are influencing their claims. As noted above, the context in which these problematic inferences were drawn was characterized by a dominant societal discourse that attributed immigrants' social woes (e.g., academic underachievement, underemployment, etc.) to their unwillingness to integrate into the wider society. Maintenance of the home language has frequently been seen as one 'symptom' of this self-imposed segregation with the result that researchers and policy-makers have been pre-disposed to interpret negative correlational relationships between L1 use and achievement as causal relationships.

It is worth mentioning some inconsistency in OECD reports with respect to the appropriate orientation that educators should adopt to immigrant-background students' home languages. As noted above, problematic interpretation of quantitative relationships have led some researchers to view home use of L1 as contributing to underachievement among immigrant-background students. By contrast, the OECD (2010c) advocates affirmative school policies towards students' home language:

> Valuing the mother tongue of immigrant students is an essential part of developing a positive and appreciative approach to diversity and identity. It means seeing students' language capacities as part of their personal, social and cultural identity and welcoming it as a tool for learning and understanding. (2010c, p. 49)

This perspective is consistent with the Council of Europe's focus on plurilingualism as an important goal of education (Little, 2010) and with a large number of studies highlighting bilingualism as a positive force in children's academic development. Reviews by Barac and Bialystok (2011) and Adesope, Lavin, Thompson and Ungerleider (2010) concluded that "the experience of speaking two languages yields cognitive benefits in the areas of attentional control, working memory, abstract and symbolic representation skills, and metalinguistic awareness" (Barac & Bialystok, 2011, p. 54).

In conclusion, there is no empirical justification for constructing immigrant students' home language as a cause of underachievement, nor for promoting early L2 immersion as a preferred instructional option. In fact, several recent comprehensive research reviews on bilingual education for underachieving minority language students suggest that in contexts where bilingual education is feasible (e.g., concentration of particular groups), it represents a superior option to immersion in the language of the host country. Francis, Lesaux and August (2006), for example, report: "The meta-analytic results clearly suggest a positive effect for bilingual instruction that is moderate in size" (p. 397). Similarly, Lindholm-Leary and Borsato (2006) conclude that minority student achievement "is positively related to sustained instruction through the student's first

language" (p. 201). Thus, in contrast to the conclusion drawn by Christensen and Stanat (2007) and other researchers and policy-makers on the basis of the PISA data, bilingual education represents a legitimate and, in many cases, feasible option for educating immigrant and minority language students.

In the French context, bilingual programs involving regional languages (e.g., Breton) are legal and are being implemented in different regions and overseas territories (Hélot & Erfurt, in press). However, there has been virtually no discussion about the possibility of implementing bilingual programs in the languages of migrant-background students (e.g., Arabic). The fact that this option is currently ideologically unacceptable not only in France but in most other European countries reflects the assimilationist rhetoric and exclusionary reality of social policies in these countries. Despite the negative orientation to the languages of migrant-background students, some educators and university researchers have collaborated to implement innovative projects focused on incorporating students' home languages into language awareness activities (l'éveil au langues) (e.g., Auger, 2008; Hélot & Young, 2006). These projects are capable of generating considerable parental involvement and communicate a positive message to students about the value of their home language and culture (Hélot & Young, 2006). They reflect a philosophy of integration (where full participation in the social and educational life of the dominant society does not require abandonment of affiliation to home cultural, linguistic, and religious realities). One can only speculate about the extent to which the perspectives of the *Charlie Hebdo* attackers might have developed differently if they had experienced an evidence-based positive orientation in the school to their linguistic and cultural accomplishments and affiliations.

Failure to consider societal power relations and identity devaluation as causal factors

The OECD PISA studies have identified home-school language differences and SES as background factors associated with academic underachievement. However, they have failed to address another set of variables associated with underachievement in countries around the world, namely, the effects of long-term social discrimination and exclusion. There is extensive research documenting the chronic underachievement of groups that have experienced systematic long-term discrimination in the wider society (see, for example, Bishop & Berryman, 2006; McCarty, 2005; Ogbu, 1978). The link between societal power relations and school experiences of some minority group students has been succinctly expressed by Ladson-Billings (1995, p. 485) with respect to African-American students: "The problem that African-American students face is the constant devaluation of their culture both in school and in the larger society." The effects of constant devaluation of culture are illustrated in the well-documented phenomenon of *stereotype threat* (Steele, 1997). Stereotype threat refers to the deterioration of individuals' task performance in contexts where negative stereotypes about their social

group are communicated to them. Thus, there is a clear link between societal power relations, identity negotiation, and task performance. Consistent with this perspective, American researchers Dolson and Burnham-Massey (2011) emphasized that instruction cannot focus only on language variables in isolation from patterns of historical and current power relations:

> *Throughout the history of public education, the school system has been unable or unwilling to systematically provide as effective programs for children from stigmatized minority groups, most notably Native Americans, African Americans, and Hispanics as it does for majority students. … each of the mentioned groups has been historically subordinated through forms of violence (war, slavery, forced relocation, and/or genocide).* (p. 74)

Among linguistically diverse students, the home language represents a very obvious marker of difference from dominant groups. Despite increasing evidence of the benefits of bilingualism for students' cognitive and academic growth, schools in many contexts continue to prohibit students from using their L1 within the school, thereby communicating to students the inferior status of their home languages and devaluing the identities of speakers of these languages. This pattern is illustrated in a study of Turkish-background students in Flemish secondary schools carried out by Agirdag (2010). He concludes:

> *[O]ur data show that Dutch monolingualism is strongly imposed in three different ways: teachers and school staff strongly encourage the exclusive use of Dutch, bilingual students are formally punished for speaking their mother tongue, and their home languages are excluded from the cultural repertoire of the school. At the same time, prestigious languages such as English and French are highly valued.* (p. 317)

Agirdag's findings are consistent with the account of French schools provided by Hélot and Young (2006) suggesting that in many European educational contexts immigrant-background students are not encouraged to take pride in their linguistic and cultural knowledge and accomplishments. Schools reinforce the devaluation of identity experienced by immigrant-background communities in the society at large.

The framework presented in Figure 1 (Cummins, 2001, 2009) sketches the ways in which societal power relations and identity negotiation intersect in determining patterns of academic achievement among marginalized group students. The ways in which teachers negotiate identities with students can exert a significant impact on the extent to which students will engage academically or withdraw from academic effort.

The framework proposes that relations of power in the wider society, ranging from coercive to collaborative in varying degrees, influence both the ways in which educators define their roles and the types of structures that are established in the educational system. Coercive relations of power refer to the exercise of power by a dominant individual, group, or country to the detriment of a subordinated individual, group or country. For example, dominant group institutions (e.g. schools) have frequently required that subordinated groups deny their cultural identity and give up their languages as a necessary condition for success in the 'mainstream' society.

Collaborative relations of power, by contrast, reflect the sense of the term 'power' that refers to 'being enabled,' or 'empowered' to achieve more. Within collaborative relations of power, 'power' is not a fixed quantity but is generated through interaction with others. The more empowered one individual or group becomes, the more is generated for others to share. Within

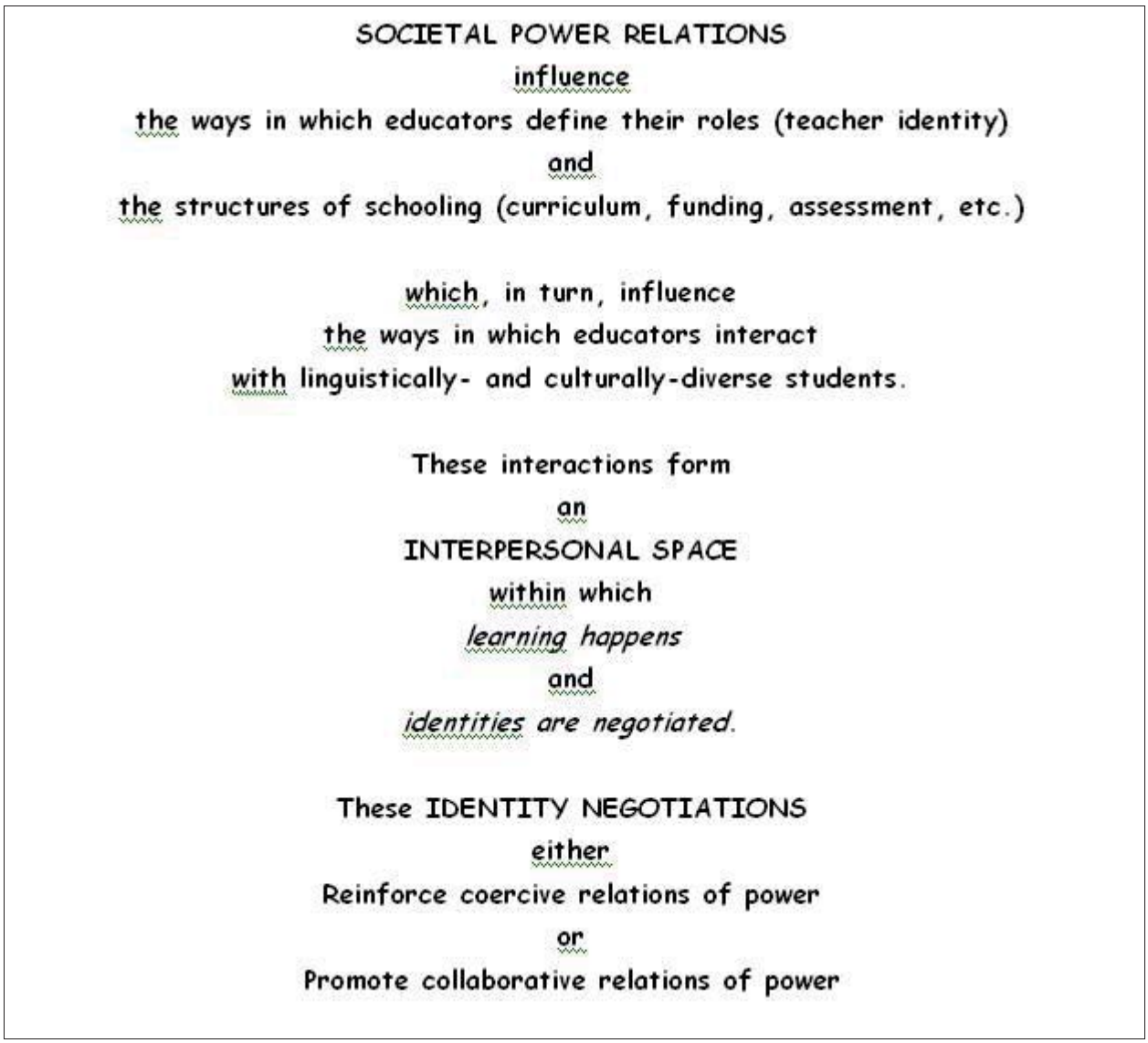


Figure 1. *Societal power relations, identity negotiation, and academic achievement*[6].

this context, *empowerment* can be defined as *the collaborative creation of power*. Students whose schooling experiences reflect collaborative relations of power participate

[6] Adapted from *Negotiating identities: Education for empowerment in a diverse society*, by J. Cummins 2001, p. 20. Copyright 2001 by J. Cummins. Reprinted with permission.

confidently in instruction as a result of the fact that their sense of identity is being affirmed and extended in their interactions with educators. They also know that their voices will be heard and respected within the classroom. Schooling amplifies rather than silences their power of *self*-expression.

Educator role definitions refer to the mindset of expectations, assumptions and goals that educators bring to the task of educating culturally diverse students. Educational structures refer to the organization of schooling in a broad sense that includes policies, programs, curriculum, and assessment. While these structures will generally reflect the values and priorities of dominant groups in society, they are not by any means fixed or static. As with most other aspects of the way societies are organized and resources distributed, educational structures are contested by individuals and groups.

Educational structures, together with educator role definitions, determine the patterns of interactions between educators, students, and communities. These interactions form an interpersonal space within which the acquisition of knowledge and formation of identity is negotiated. Power is created and shared within this interpersonal space where minds and identities meet. As such, these teacher-student interactions constitute the most immediate determinant of student academic success or failure.

The interactions between educators, students and communities are never neutral; in varying degrees, they either reinforce coercive relations of power or promote collaborative relations of power. In the former case, they contribute to the disempowerment of culturally diverse students and communities; in the latter case, the interactions constitute a process of empowerment that enables educators, students and communities to challenge the operation of coercive power structures.

This framework generates a set of questions that can be utilized to examine the extent to which schools are reflecting societal patterns of exclusion (coercive relations of power) or challenging these exclusionary discourses by promoting collaborative relations of power. The following questions are illustrative of this line of inquiry:

To what extent do school leaders:

- Promote respect for and high expectations in relation to students' cultural, linguistic, and intellectual resources and actively seek to mobilize these resources in the instructional program?

- Actively encourage teachers to connect the curriculum to students' lives (experiences, interests, aspirations)?

- Create structures within the school that affirm the legitimacy of students' home languages as tools for thinking and as stepping stones to strong academic performance in the school language?

- Establish strong parental and community participation as a priority;

- Establish a climate where student voice is heard and students share in the ownership of the school as a learning organization?
- Establish a collaborative ethos among school staff, and work to support all teachers in developing the knowledge base to teach diverse learners effectively?
- Recruit staff with the cultural/linguistic expertise and sensitivity to connect with students and communities?
- Initiate an evidence-based language policy process within the school that articulates belief systems about language and literacy development and directions for attaining articulated goals?

The description of the highly centralized French school system discussed earlier (Hélot & Young, 2006) suggests that few of these questions would be answered affirmatively with respect to that context. Educational structures in some other contexts may be characterized by greater flexibility but, by and large, most school systems have not focused on identity affirmation in association with literacy development as a central instructional goal.

In short, three potential sources of educational disadvantage characterize the social situation of many immigrant-background communities: (a) home-school language switch requiring students to learn academic content through a second language; (b) low-SES associated with family income and low levels of parental education; (c) marginalized group status deriving from social discrimination and/or racism in the wider society. Some communities in different countries are characterized by all three risk factors (e.g., many Spanish-speaking students in the United States, many Turkish-speaking students in different European countries). In other cases, only one risk factor may be operating (e.g., middle-class African-American students in the United States). As outlined in the next section, although these three social conditions constitute risk factors for students' academic success, they become realized as educational disadvantage only when the school fails to respond appropriately or reinforces the negative impact of the broader social factors.

Effective Instruction that Responds to Causes of Underachievement

Table 2 elaborates on the three sources of potential educational disadvantage outlined above and also specifies the evidence-based educational responses that are likely to have the highest impact in addressing these sources of potential disadvantage.

Home-school language differences

As noted above, the argument that L1 use at home will exert a negative effect on achievement in L2 is refuted both by the PISA data and by the academic success of vast numbers of middle-class bilingual and multilingual students in countries around the world. Thus, parents who interact consistently with their children in L1 as a means of promoting bilingualism and biliteracy can do so with no concern that this will impede their children's acquisition of the school language.

Student Background	Linguistically Diverse	Low-SES	Marginalized Status
Sources of potential disadvantage	• Failure to understand instruction due to home/school language differences	• Inadequate prenatal care • Inadequate nutrition • Housing segregation • Lack of cultural and material resources in the home due to poverty • Limited range of language interaction • Inadequate access to print at home and school, etc.	• Societal discrimination • Low teacher expectations • Stereotype threat • Identity devaluation
Evidence-based instructional response	• Scaffold comprehension and production of language across the curriculum • Reinforce academic language across the curriculum	• Maximize literacy engagement • Reinforce academic language across the curriculum	• Connect instruction to students' lives • Affirm student identities in association with literacy engagement

Table 2. *Ways in which Schools Can Reduce the Impact of Potential Educational Disadvantage.*

Also, as noted above, the international research data strongly supports the effectiveness of bilingual education for minority group students. Thus, bilingual education represents a legitimate and, in many cases, feasible option for educating immigrant and minority language students.

In cases where bilingual education cannot be implemented either for reasons of feasibility or ideology, then it is important that *all* teachers (not just language specialists) know how to support students in acquiring academic skills in the school language. The term *scaffolding* is commonly used to describe the temporary supports that teachers provide to enable learners to carry out academic tasks. These supports can be reduced gradually as the learner gains more expertise. They include strategies such as use of visuals and concrete experiences and demonstrations to increase comprehension. Teachers also need to reinforce students' awareness of and ability to use academic language across the curriculum (for examples, see Cummins & Early, 2015; Hélot & Young, 2006; Wong Fillmore & Fillmore, 2012).

Low SES

Some of the sources of potential educational disadvantage associated with SES are beyond the capacity of individual schools to address (e.g., housing segregation) but the potential negative effects of other factors can be ameliorated by school policies and instructional practices. In this regard, the two sources of potential disadvantage that are most significant are the limited access to print that many low-SES students experience in their homes, neighborhoods and schools (Duke, 2000; Neuman & Celano, 2001) and the more limited range of language interaction that has been documented in the United States in many low-SES families as compared to more affluent families (e.g., Hart & Risley, 1995). The logical inference that derives from these differences is that schools serving low-SES students should (a) immerse them in a print-rich environment in order to promote literacy engagement across the curriculum and (b) focus in a sustained way on how academic language works and enable students to take ownership of academic language by using it for powerful (i.e., identity-affirming) purposes.

Marginalized Status

As noted above, there is a clear link between societal power relations, identity negotiation, and school performance. How can schools counteract the negative effects of societal power relations that devalue minority group identities? Ladson-Billings (1994) has expressed the essence of an effective instructional response: "When students are treated as competent they are likely to demonstrate competence" (1994, p. 123). In other words, educators, both individually and collectively, must challenge the devaluation of students' language, culture, and identity in the wider society by implementing instructional strategies that enable students to develop "identities of competence" (Manyak, 2004) in the school context. These instructional strategies will communicate high expectations to students regarding their ability to succeed academically and support them in meeting these academic demands by affirming their identities and connecting curriculum to their lives (see Hélot, Sneddon, and Daly, 2015, for examples). In the absence of instructional strategies that reinforce the identities of students from socially marginalized groups, students are more likely to become alienated both from their own cultural background and that of the dominant society.

Among the overlapping instructional strategies reviewed by Cummins and Early (2015) that have been successfully implemented for affirming students' identities are (a) encouraging immigrant-background and socially marginalized students to use their L1 as a cognitive tool for carrying out academic tasks; (b) promoting opportunities for students to develop literacy skills in their home languages; (c) enabling students to write and web-publish literary and multimodal creative work (e.g., stories, poems, videos, music); this work can be in the school language or (ideally) in multiple languages depending on the context and language skills of the students; and (d) implementing projects focused on

inquiry and knowledge generation that encourage students to use both their L1 and L2, perhaps in partnership with a collaborating class in another location. These forms of pedagogy are aimed at enabling students to use language for powerful purposes that are identity-affirming and motivate students to engage academically. We have used the term *identity texts* to refer to the products of these pedagogical collaborations between teachers and students as well as the processes in which they engage to produce these texts (Cummins, 2004; Cummins & Early, 2015).

Identity Texts

Collaborative research that we have carried out with teachers over the past 15 years has established the principle that students from diverse backgrounds will engage actively with literacy only to the extent that such engagement is identity-affirming. In this regard, creative writing and other forms of cultural production (e.g., art, drama, video creation, etc.) assume particular importance as an *expression* of identity, a *projection* of identity into new social spheres, and a *re-creation* of identity as a result of feedback from and dialogue with multiple audiences. This re-creation of identity through the production of what we have termed *identity texts* assumes particular importance in the case of students from marginalized social groups whose languages, cultures, religions, and institutions have been devalued, often for generations, in the wider society. Students invest their identities in the creation of these texts which can be written, spoken, signed, visual, musical, dramatic, or combinations in multimodal form. The identity text then holds a mirror up to students in which their identities are reflected back in a positive light. When students share identity texts with multiple audiences (peers, teachers, parents, grandparents, sister classes, the media, etc.) they are likely to receive positive feedback and affirmation of self in interaction with these audiences. Two examples will illustrate the process.

École New Era School's dual language book project. A report in the *Winnipeg Free Press* (15 January, 2015) in Manitoba, Canada described how the dual language book project initiated in 2012 by teacher Amy Buehler in the Brandon Manitoba school district received recognition from President Barack Obama as an example of powerful pedagogy. The project is described as follows:

> *The project was seen as an opportunity to create some valuable dual language resources while providing students with the opportunity to strengthen their literacy skills in their first language and in English. Over the years, students have been able to choose their own topics, which have ranged from music to tales from their home countries, while coming up with their own form of style and illustrations. Some of the books are in French, Spanish and Mandarin, but all have the English translation. "It's a great opportunity for our new students to maintain their first language as they develop their English language skills," [Buelher] said.*[7]

[7] http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/local/288713501.html

The school sent President Obama a set of the books written by the students and in his response he thanked them for sharing their book project with him. "Hearing from thoughtful, engaged students like you gives me hope for a brighter tomorrow…As the future leaders of the global community, I know there are no limits to what you can accomplish if you continue to dream big and study hard."

The motivation to engage with literacy that identity text projects generate is clearly expressed by Grade 8 student Anna Zhang, who (at the time) was in the process of creating her second dual language book. She said she was happy to learn that Obama has a copy of the first book she has ever written and continued: "I told my mom and she didn't believe me. That makes me want to write another book."

Songide'ewin: Aboriginal narratives. The Ojibwe word *Songide'ewin*, meaning *strength of the heart*, captures the spirit of the visual art and poetry project initiated by Canadian university researcher, M. Kristiina Montero, in which First Nations high school students (most aged 16-18) worked with Ojibwe artist and elder, Rene Meshake to create original works of art and written responses to these works of art. The project took place in the context of a Native Arts and Culture program in an urban Ontario secondary school. The program does not assume that participating students have knowledge of their Aboriginal histories, ceremonies, languages, and cultures. In fact, many, if not most of the Aboriginal students participating in the program have grown up, to a large extent, in an urban environment, removed from Aboriginal communities. The project is described as follows by Montero, Marsh, Bice-Zaugg, and Cummins (2013):

> *As part of the Native Arts and Culture course, Elder Rene Meshake, Ojibwe artist, author, storyteller and community activist, facilitated an exploration of Aboriginal worldviews, teachings, and expressions of identity using symbols, stories, colours, and cadence with acrylic paints on canvas. A non-hierarchical dialogic space was created so that in the artistic silences, all artists could reflect on their deepest spirits and souls, allowing for their true, uncensored selves to appear on canvas. Students conceptualized and created paintings through which they explored different aspects of their cultural, linguistic, and/or musical heritages. For example, students explored the meaning and significance of symbols representing their clans (e.g., Bear, Wolf, Turtle), their vision of the Creation Story, or other important cultural artifacts (e.g., Eagle Feather, Beaded headdress, Flying Eagle).*

Quotations from two of the participating students, *Makwa Oshkwenh*-Adam Cyril John Marsh and Cassandra Bice-Zaugg, will illustrate the impact of this project in affirming identities and challenging a historic legacy of coercive relations of power (see the Montero et al., 2013 article for a much more complete account of the impact of this project):

> *When I was making the painting, I thought a lot about myself. I have a lot of self-identity problems, as most people know. I have a lot of self-identity problems. I put a lot of that into this painting. [Making the painting and reflecting on its significance] has changed my life*

pretty much. How I look at everything now and how I think of things—[I have] a different perspective. (quotation from *Makwa Oshkwenh*-Adam Cyril John Marsh in Montero et al., 2013).

Figure 2. *Adam Marsh,* Eagle Flying*, 2011, Acrylic on canvas, 12 x 12. Photo credit: M. Kristiina Montero.*

Cassandra Bice-Zaugg offered the following reflections on the poem she created in response to a collective painting created by the entire class under the guidance of teacher Eric Flemming:

Figure 3. *Eric Flemming and the Songide'ewin Community Artists,* Unity*, 2011, Acrylic on canvas, 12x12. Photo credit: M. Kristiina Montero.*

In the beginning of the poem, I talk about respect, honesty, wisdom, bravery, humility, and truth, standing together as one, one of love. This is how I see my ancestors—very strong. They built their families on a firm foundation, and they made sure their children knew who they were. This was before the settlers, before confederation.

Then I write about standing in the light, the lights of the negativity. A lot of people view the light as God, heavenly. I decided to take a different approach on the

> *metaphor of light. When the Canadian government first introduced the Indian Act in 1876, its members thought that they were doing a good thing—that was their light. However, change the perspective and view the Indian Act from our perspective—their light was our negativity, our darkness. Their light was and is our pain. Since colonization, multiple generations have been destroyed and have identity problems that cause many to numb the pain with drugs and alcohol. That is where I saw the light as I was writing the poem. My perception of light changed. It turned into how I felt I was looked down upon as a First Nations person. Under the Indian Act, just because I have a number, because I have status, I am more likely to go to jail or be incarcerated than graduate from high school. As soon as I was labeled, a multitude of statistics began to bombard me. It was difficult for me to see that their light was taking my people, flipping us upside down, moving us around, and telling us how to define ourselves, how we should act, and what we should look like. As I continued to write the poem, I explained that we reflect the light of the hate, destruction, jealousy and genocide—the effects of Residential Schools. My grandmother is a Residential School survivor; she is a real trooper. She didn't let that experience break her, and this is something very important for me to remember.*

Cassandra also expresses the centrality of negotiating identities in ways that generate empowerment:

> *Take away identity and what do you have? If you have a student that doesn't know who they are, do you think they care about what goes on in the classroom?* (Cassandra Bice-Zaugg, Mississauga of the New Credit First Nations, Ontario) (Montero, et al., 2013).

These examples of identity texts and students' reflections on them provide a sense both of the ways in which empowerment represents a process of identity transformation and the opportunities for educators within schools to create contexts of empowerment. The identity texts profiled here (and many others—see Cummins & Early, 2015) enable students to express their identities, project their identities into new social spheres, and ultimately re-create their sense of self as competent, creative, and imaginative people with important things to say and contribute to their communities and societies. In societal contexts where the identities of marginalized communities have been devalued historically and where they are still excluded from full and equitable participation in the society, school projects focused on affirmation of identity challenge the historical legacy of coercive relations of power and promote collaborative relations of power.

To What Extent Can Pedagogies of Powerful Communication Reduce Youth Alienation?

It would be naïve to suggest that educational changes alone can reverse the attraction of militant movements for alienated youth. Although many young people who have joined these groups have not succeeded in the educational system, others have graduated from secondary school and obtained university degrees. However, it seems

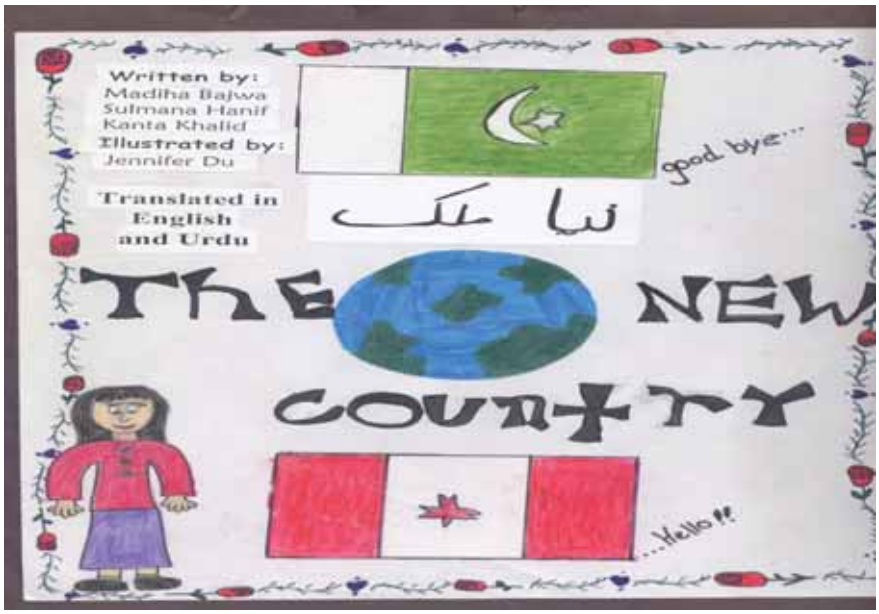
reasonable to suggest (in the absence of hard data at this time) that low educational attainment can contribute to the sense of alienation and hostility that some young people experience and make them more susceptible to manipulation by radical elements. In the process of this manipulation, a whole new identity is offered to those targeted—a transformation from social and educational failure to warrior for a just and divinely-ordained cause.

The analysis proposed in the present paper is that schools' failure to connect curriculum to students' lives and affirm their linguistic, cultural, and religious identities increases the risk of school failure among youth from marginalized communities. School failure, in turn, makes young people more vulnerable to persuasion regarding the decadence of the western societies in which they have grown up and the righteousness of the struggle to overthrow these societies.

The analysis presented in Table 2 suggests that schools can respond to the devaluation of identity experienced by young people from marginalized groups by connecting instruction to students' lives, affirming their identities, and enabling them to use their languages in powerful (i.e. identity-affirming) ways that generate positive responses from relevant audiences (e.g., teachers, parents, peers, partner classes, etc.). This orientation represents 'integration' in a much more concrete sense than the intellectually superficial 'blame game' pursued by European leaders where they attribute youth alienation simultaneously to the unwillingness of minority groups to integrate and European societies' permissive multicultural policies that tolerate and encourage this self-imposed exclusion from mainstream society.

The possibilities of pedagogy that aims to affirm students' identities are well expressed by Madiha, an immigrant student from Pakistan who entered Lisa Leoni's grade 7 (age 13) class in the Greater Toronto Area. Lisa encouraged students to use their L1 to complete assignments and communicated to students an affirmative message about the value of their languages and cultures (see Cummins and Early, 2015 for a detailed description). Although her English proficiency was minimal after only six weeks in Canada, Madiha created with two of her peers (who had been in Canada for about 3.5 years) a 20-page dual-language (Urdu/English) book entitled *The New Country* that outlined the challenges of moving from one country to another. Madiha reflected on her experience as follows:

> *I am proud of The New Country because it is our story. Nobody else has written that story. And when we showed it to Ms. Leoni she said it was really good. She said "It's about your home country, and family, and Canada, it's all attached, that's so good." I like that because it means she cares about our family and our country, not just Canada. Because she cares about us, that makes us want to do more work. My parents were really happy to see that I was writing in both Urdu and English; my mother was happy because she knows that not everyone has that chance*. (Cummins & Early, 2015, p. 52).



Here, Madiha expresses the essence of the argument in the present paper. In response to her teacher's approving comment that their story connects their home country, their family, and their new country, Madiha observes that "she cares about our family and our country, not just Canada" and "because she cares about us, that makes us want to do more work". Expressed in more general terms, integration involves connecting home country, family, and the realities of the new country rather than abandoning the languages, cultures and religions that immigrants bring from their countries of origin. Schools can model this process of integration in powerful ways. Unfortunately, however, up to this point few have done so either in Europe or North America.

The identity text projects that have been reviewed in this paper and elsewhere (Cummins & Early, 2015; Hélot, Sneddon, and Daly, 2014) represent examples of what Walker (2014) has called *pedagogies of powerful communication*. This description was used to characterize the experience of marginalized group students in the United States who participated in a year-long participatory study of a high-school Youth Radio and Radio Arts program. Students in the program created radio programs and wrote poetry and prose that was broadcast to an audience of peers and adults. Walker describes the impact of this pedagogy of powerful communication as follows:

> *This study suggests that to break the cycle of remedial ESL instruction that reproduces the marginalization of poor and immigrant students, we must shift our attention from language skills and exercises in communicative competence to creating the conditions for a* pedagogy of powerful communication *(emphasis original). This pedagogy prepares students to participate in their multiple spheres of experience (school, work, online communities) with agentive identities and powerful language to accomplish personal, social, and civic goals.* (p. 167)

> *What we came to recognize, however, was that it was not the technology itself that mattered most to students: it was the social and personal purposes of technology for exploring identities, emotion, ideas, and the contradictions in society, and communicating their perspectives and constructing identities, that mattered most to them.* (p. 175)

> *This book argues for a revisioning of second language education that moves away from remedial instruction and deficient notions of communication, toward a* pedagogy of powerful communication *(emphasis original) that develops critical multiliteracies and promotes youth engagement with media and the arts across multiple contexts*. (p. 177)

In short, a pedagogy of powerful communication that enables students to create identity texts has the potential to promote identities of competence (Manyak, 2004) among students from marginalized group communities. By contrast, one-size-fits-all pedagogies that refuse to connect with students' lives and view identity as irrelevant to learning are not only in violation of the research evidence but also likely to produce academically unsuccessful and alienated students.

Conclusion

Policy-makers have chosen to ignore extensive empirical evidence suggesting the following: (a) factors associated with SES and broader patterns of societal power relations exert a major influence on educational outcomes; (b) literacy engagement is a stronger predictor of reading performance than SES, and low-income students have significantly less access to books and print than do higher-income students; (c) students will engage academically only to the extent that classroom interactions and academic effort are identity-affirming. The framework proposed for stimulating school-based policy discussions argues that school polices need to maximize print access and literacy engagement among marginalized group students and in addition we need to enable students to use language and literacy in ways that will affirm their identities and challenge the deficit orientation that is frequently built into programs and curriculum for low-income and bilingual learners.

In the past in both North America and Europe (and elsewhere), students from low-SES marginalized group communities who dropped out of school have frequently been incarcerated as a result of becoming involved in various forms of criminal activity (drugs, violence, etc.). There is a very significant over-representation in the prison population of racialized groups such as African Americans (in the United States), First Nations (in Canada), and individuals of North African origin (in France). Many societies have been content simply to build more prisons rather than seriously rethink issues related to schooling, equity and societal discrimination. Today, however, as the Charlie Hebdo attack illustrates, the global jihadist movement offers alienated youth a much more powerful and identity-expanding alternative to a life of petty crime or a dead-end low-

paying job. The consequences for western societies of continued school failure among youth from marginalized communities are no longer only economic. The consequences have become lethal for the 'mainstream' population.

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Being well: Educated

Tim Corcoran and Tom Billington

Our remit for producing this chapter suggested a confluence between critical education theory and social constructionist approaches. Quite an invitation given the prospective trajectories involved! As both of us share backgrounds as practitioners (educational/school psychologists), we decided to draw the parameter for discussion around an aspect of education surprisingly seen in some circles as contentious or controversial in present day practice: the idea of being well in education. International education policy and practice is replete with political and community action geared to the promotion of wellbeing (in the UK e.g., *Every Child Matters* [DES, 2004]). This circumstance is not peculiar to the sociopolitical arena of education as the notion of supporting and maintaining a healthy and productive populace is today central to activities taking place across government sectors (e.g. social/community services, employment, housing, sport and recreation, etc.; *Wellbeing in Four Policy Areas* [New Economics Foundation, 2014]). And yet, concerns over the ways in which such activity have been delivered are mounting. Common amongst these protests are collective apprehensions around potential deleterious effects of one-size-fits-all methodologies and clinical models of personhood.

Certainly, we do not oppose criticisms like these. In fact, we have each dedicated our professional and academic lives to addressing institutional oppression and disciplinary injustice (Billington, 1996, 2000; Corcoran, 2007, 2014a). But as we see it, critical education theory has, in the main, struggled to include and/or provide an account of human being capable of providing a way forward not constrained by the limitations of psychological individualism. We believe this to be the case whether such theory explicitly takes aim at today's so-called wellbeing agenda or more implicitly, maintains commonplace dualisms prevalent in dominant psychologies. To address this, here we deliberate how ontological constructionism might enable different perspectives on the topic. There is no doubting education has the capacity to change people's lives (Oreopoulos & Salvanes, 2011). Our first task then is to situate educational practice as an ontological enterprise. Next, to assist us in providing an interpretation of ontological constructionism, we primarily rely on two important theorists: John Shotter and Ken Gergen. Specifically, we examine the primacy Gergen (2009) gives to what he terms relational achievements and Shotter's (2010) attentiveness to how we orient in/to social practice. We then engage a hotly debated area of contemporary education, the advent of what has been called therapeutic education, reviewing this position from the lens of ontological constructionism. This undertaking sets up our conclusion: being well in education ultimately depends on the intentionality of practice.

Our discussion turns on two key contentions: i) educational practice should be driven by the pursuit of justice and *if* accepted as an ontological opportunity then ii) education can invite pursuit of a particular kind of justice – a psychosocial justice supporting wellness in the human condition. In education, the theory we develop and the practices we engage are inexorably linked to issues of justice, not only for the way they are practiced but also for the way in which they are invoked. What we mean here relies on a Wittgensteinian (2001) concern. It is a pervasive awareness to do with the living of lives and practicing of practices out in the openness of the social world. Through his work, Wittgenstein continues to propose what is seemingly such a simple inquiry and yet, as usually is the case, a complex prospect with no preordained plan: how to go on? Such uncertainty provides the undercurrent to the tidal-like debates accompanying ideas in and around education:

> …*alongside the notion of education as an equalising apparatus runs another conception of schooling as a socialising and moralising enterprise. For if education was to be a vital apparatus of citizenship, it was never simply because of the intellectual capacities and qualifications it incurred* (Rose, 1999, p. 192).

As members of our communities, we persist in scrutinising the ways in which education takes place and the discussion presented here stays on topic. But, as we see it, our interests are informed by different kinds of understanding to the ones usually inspiring educational debate.

Just-as-well education

Historically, of course, education has been intended for a privileged few, designed not only for the acquisition of facts, skills or knowledge, however, but throughout Antiquity and into the Renaissance, more usually with some more general 'good' in mind (Erasmus, 1997). The aspiration to virtue (arête) or the ideal (paideia) was embedded in early classical education and the responsibility of educators to attend to a general 'wellness' in society has an ancient history. The roots of our contemporary education and indeed psychology are thus in Antiquity; but well before *Locke, Shaftesbury and Reid* (Billig, 2008), in the Socratic dialogues - dialectics as learning; in the virtues – learning as a quest for goodness in the eventual adult (Plato, 1955); or in learning through activity (Aristotle, 1976). Educational discourse over millennia has linked the 'what' and 'how' of learning to the kind of human beings we might become, as part of a community, the people, which is a tradition maintained by early Christian educators (Augustine, 1991). Education clearly incorporated matters of moral, spiritual and political concern and offered the prospect, variously, of either the pinnacle of secular achievement or else the route to a heavenly eternity.

What had historically been an education for the privileged was radically re-visited with the advent of mass schooling in the 19th century (Soysal & Strang, 1989), a new way of thinking about education emerging which assumed the characteristics of the industrial

world it was to serve. To use the UK as an example, there were at least three drivers of mass schooling from 1800 onwards: economic, with advocates emphasising that education should be technological and provide an 'introduction in reading, writing and arithmetic' (Peel, 1802); ethical and moral, with proponents seeking to minimize their feelings of disgust at the accounts of children who, often as young as six to eight years, were forced into 'labour [which] was so excessive that it took away all opportunity of moral and mental improvement' (Hansard, 1832, June); and political, the culmination of which we find in the liberal democratic theories of early psychologist-educationalists (Dewey, 1897, 1938).

Competing 19th century utilitarian and idealistic discourses concerning children and education were captured in British Parliamentary debates; for example, some thought childhood should be 'the time…of innocent pleasure and enjoyment' (Hansard, 1832, March), others that children's minds needed to be 'enlightened by education' (Hansard, 1832, June). However, the equilibrium between body, mind, soul, which had been a fundamental idea for many educationalists from Plato to Rousseau, had been de-stabilized by approaches to mass schooling which were being organized along industrialized lines and in accordance with the principles of a marketization or commodification of knowledge. We believe that such processes are in the 21st century resulting in narrow means of assessment in which individual persons are accounted for on an unprecedented industrial scale (Pisa Tests, OECD, 2014).

Ninenteenth century outrage at the horrors to which children were being subjected in the operation of a 'free market' was not only expressed in governmental discourse but also in popular fiction, for example, in the character of Dickens' Gradgrind, we are invited to consider the frightening ontological consequences of being subjected to teaching by a

> *…man of realities. A man of facts and calculations…who…with a rule and a pair of scales, and the multiplication table always in his pocket, sir, ready to weigh and measure any parcel of human nature, and tell you exactly what it comes to…* (Dickens, orig. 1854).

We understand the esteem in which the acquisition of knowledge was held in the 19th century and it is clearly central within any contemporary educational system. However, we believe it is vital to an understanding of educational processes that we understand the links between any knowledge, the processes which led to its creation and any potential future knowledges. We also believe it vital to ensure that the knowledge is inculcated with the principles and values which ultimately lead to those kind of human (social) benefits which might be termed, 'well-being' – which is, again, an ancient tradition in educational thought and practice.

> *This then is the fruit of all studies; this is the goal. Having acquired our knowledge, we must turn it to usefulness, and employ it for the common good* (Vives, orig. 1531; in Watson, 1913, p. 283).

During the course of the 20th century, further transformations of the economic and political supported the conditions under which notions of that common good could

become fragmented into individuals, decontextualized and depersonalized. At one and the same time we could now as individuals be lured into accepting a sense of responsibility for events at a global level, for example, in new media representations of famine or disaster across the globe, and yet in those same social processes experience an isolation or indeed alienation, immersed as we are in epistemologies of the human that seek to define and restrict ontological potentials by performing only a very limited repertoire of emotional responses. Concerns had first been raised in the 19th century when change in the conditions of material production had been seen to affect an essential change in the human producers – leading to what in effect was virtually a new human being (Owen, 1815; Williams, 1987), 'Thomas Carlyle warned…that people would not only adapt mechanical processes of thought but come to believe that the mind itself was a machine…' (Davis, 2002, p. 158).

Ontological constructionism

The isolation, some might say alienation (Billington, 2000) of the individual is a consequence of certain kinds of social action, educational practice included, which are a response to the immediate context in which we find ourselves, a propagation or negation of emergent relationships and institutional practices or to the very norms that have been presumed to exist in the background to our lives. There are some who claim societal norms are largely independent of what people achieve together, a view encapsulated at its most extreme in the infamous quote, 'there is no such thing as society' (Thatcher, 1987). More hopefully, however, Gergen (2009, p. 133) stresses: 'The word "I" does not index an origin of action, but a relational achievement'. So here we add our voices, calling at once back and forth to traditions that enable comprehensive approaches to learning, aimed at maximising socio-cultural and intellectual development, which purposes, we believe, extend to present day calls for sustainable inclusive practices in education (Corcoran, 2012; Slee, 2011). Of particular concern to us is the enduring difficulty contemporary arrangements have in ensuring these conditions are not only present but actively pursued. As Smeyers and Burbules (2006, p. 447) deliberate: 'Is there a way of thinking about practices, and our ways of *learning* and *coming to enact them*, that is liberating and not merely (in the pejorative sense) "conserving" or reproductive' (emphasis in original)?

In effect, pursuit of the kind of psychosocial justice discussed here is simultaneously procedural and distributive because of the ontological opportunities it enables. As practitioners involved in the field of education, we actively help to create or sustain forms of life when we enact our professional responsibilities. Although often not explicated, this asks us to be critically reflexive of our values, able to acknowledge and understand how these values work within a 'moral science' of human action (Shotter, 1993). In contrast to more traditional practices in psychology oriented toward universalist claims, discerning both ontological and epistemological purposes in education requires us

to problematise practices that permit decontextualisation and depersonalisation. Knowledge use in this sense is not necessarily a product to be transferred from intellect to intellect. Instead, the process of learning, in which knowledge is engaged, commits to transforming the forms of life within which people exist. Shotter (p. 78) explains:

> *…the 'grounds' for our claims to knowledge ultimately are to be found in who we 'are', in our forms of life. For it is in our socialisation into certain ways of being that we learn how to do such things as making claims, raising questions, conducting arguments, sensing disagreements, recognising agreements, and so on. These ontological skills – these ways of being a certain kind of socially competent, first-person member of our society – are necessary for there to be any questions, or arguments, at all.*

Acknowledging and accepting education as 'socialisation into certain ways of being' compels us to repeatedly revisit our relationship with the purposes of schooling and the kinds of ontological skills promoted therein. The urgency of this call is exacerbated by current sociopolitical movements within and across neoliberal societies encouraging ways of being premised in radical individualism and overt self-interest (Vassallo, 2014). In this contemporary sense, the individual cannot be extricated from a context that always actively constitutes who they are. And, in synchronicity, the person responds to their environment in ways that signal their active involvement in social practice.

We do not presuppose that responsibilities for social practices like education or health care rest solely in the hands of our institutions or wholly in the agency of the individual – be they adults or children. If responsibilities are to be accounted for, these at all times should be understood simultaneously in personal, relational and institutional terms. In practice, we can embrace responsibilities in direct and fundamental ways by acknowledging our ethical, moral and political anchoring, acknowledging the constitutive nature of our use of discourse, and taking onus for the kinds of ontological opportunities enabled by our engagements with people. Because this kind of work has the potential to engage across multiple nexus, our aim is to understand differing perspectives, from the individual and the institutional, in terms of how these share responsibility in constituting social action. As education theorist Henry Giroux remarks:

> *Educators need to cast a critical eye on those forms of knowledge and social relations that define them through a conceptual purity and political innocence that not only cloud* how they come into being *but also ignore that the alleged neutrality on which they stand is already grounded in ethico-political choices* (2011, p. 75; our emphasis).

As ethical, moral and political practice, education must be about the pursuit of justice (i.e. fairness and equity) and those involved in its practice cannot ignore the obligations intrinsic to responsible forms of action. But how should we understand the possibilities entailed in treating education as an enabler of justice? Psychology, via its theory and practice, has too often ignored those possibilities, articulated by Dewey and by his mentor, William James, and instead proactively supported a kind of impersonality to education, more often than not promoting the epistemics of learning to the detriment of

ontological opportunities. In the following section, to assist us in exploring further theoretical conditions open to prospective action, we explore Shotter's (2010) interest in explicating orientations to practice.

Orienting to purpose – moving down the line

In 1931 Wittgenstein admitted: 'I don't believe I have ever invented a line of thinking, I have always taken one over from someone else' (1980, p. 19). The significance of this acknowledgement, we feel, is too often ignored in psychological research. Whether we apply its sentiment to our involvement with psychological theory or as practitioners when working with people, Wittgenstein's attitude helps to remind us that social practices precede us i.e. they are already in motion prior to our involvement. This realisation is important not simply to give respect to our past and what has come before us, it assists us in re-viewing ways in which we engage people and a world as always already in process. Further, this acknowledgement pushes our attention beyond thoughts of probable cause toward anticipating enlivened and dynamic future possibilities. In this section we extend our thinking about process orientations to psychological work by taking up (not over) some recent considerations. In doing so we are keen to extend the concept of ontological constructionism to further its accessibility and applicability to practitioners. Being well in education, as we see it, is enabled via our ethical orientations that offer capacity to sustain or potentially divert us from preferred ways of being.

Those fortunate enough to have children of their own or relationships with younger people are often aware that our capacity as adults, in being able to provide younger generations with knowledge of history, carries incredible responsibility. This is plainly evident when our son or daughter's interest in music moves past The Wiggles to works considered to be of greater psychological significance. At these instances of enlightenment, adults can, if they choose to do so (and are proficiently knowledgeable themselves), explain to the young person how musical influence transcends generations. In a recent interview on the release of his album *High Hopes*, Bruce Springsteen reflected:

> *You hear little bits of your music in other songs but then they take it to another place. They take it to a place where you wouldn't have taken it, you know. And that's what you hope for. When you're playing, you hope that somebody hears your voice, is interested in what you're doing and then gathers what they think might be of value in it and then moves it down the line* (cited in Powers, 2014).

Acknowledging that a song, a certain social circumstance or practice did not simply appear in the here and now but can be connected to a history or tradition helps us to understand living as a dynamic and active process. And it is in his attention to living – instead of the more stationary aspects of life – that we find Shotter's work compelling.

From his perspective, Shotter asks us not to ignore what has come before but to engage with knowledge as 'transitory understandings', unfolding in the ongoing activity of living relations. This position receives what might be considered to be unexpected support from the neuroscientist, Antonio Damasio (1994, p. xviii):

> *I have a difficult time seeing scientific results, especially in neurobiology, as anything but provisional approximations, to be enjoyed for a while and discarded as soon as better accounts become available...[this] does not imply diminished enthusiasm for the attempt to improve provisional approximations.*

Acceptance of a more process-oriented understanding of living encourages us to reconsider the meanings we develop through our relationships. In drawing our attention to the ceaseless flow of activity in which we are embedded, not only does such acknowledgement dissuade us from trying to anchor such movement, it keeps forever-unfinalised meanings we help to create.

In his more recent work, Shotter calls on us to scrutinise the ways in which we 'orient' ourselves to what comes next as we go on relating to others in social practice. Transitory understandings are simply that i.e. lulls in a wind that fails to abate. But, as participants in the social milieu, to be able to share connections to meaning or facilitate joint action, Shotter suggests we must continually look to anticipate another's response to our sayings. In what also accounts as an erudite brief on learning, he says: 'If we are to "catch onto" something, or to "get" it, we must first know how to anticipate it, and then determine what it in fact *is* for us by confirming, in our further responses to it, that is indeed the thing we anticipated it to be' (2011, p. 445; emphasis in original). This is of course how tradition continues but as Springsteen and Wittgenstein highlight, capacity for agency and change are always present in the way we practice meaning. We do this as we 'determine what it in fact *is* for us'.

For educational and psychological practice, how we orient to our surroundings via our anticipatory responses suggests the ontological potentials such practices maintain. For example, how might we address evaluative practices that often determine what is wrong with a child or what it is s/he cannot do? Or, how might adults mobilise authority and power in their relationships with young people? Too often, in our attempts at understanding student academic performance or behaviour, psychologists are called upon to capture, or as it is more commonly known, *assess* student ability. Once measured or ascertained, this understanding becomes a headline written into the narrative assigned to the individual. This kind of psychological knowledge carries incredible weight and by fixating on the past in this way, a person's future options, particularly concerning opportunities for sui juris wellbeing, become limited by public account. Fundamentally then, for the discussion we present here, we ask: how should we orient to the purposes of education? This question circles back to where we started. At the beginning of this chapter we laid out two key contentions: i) that educational practice should be driven by the pursuit of justice and *if* accepted as an ontological opportunity then ii) education can invite pursuit of a particular kind of justice – a psychosocial justice supporting wellness

in the human condition. Whilst we do not have scope here to provide an extended projection for how this can be achieved, we contrast Shotter's position with three critical perspectives – on therapeutic education, neuroscience and social constructionism - for what these say about the purposes of educational practice.

How should education go on?

From the outset we want to make clear we do in fact share some of the unease expressed by critics regarding either a hegemony of the emotional or an imposition of a standardised spectrum of emotionality. Indeed, one of us (TB) delivered a paper at a British Psychological Society conference warning of just such dangers (Billington, 2001), only to be followed by a speaker who was suggesting just that i.e. that psychologists could begin to measure children's well-being in schools. We too, therefore, find problematic the infiltration of such crude yet powerful psychological ideas into education. However, the aetiology is far from precise, and the door between psychology and education has been revolving for over a hundred years, indeed arguably there has never actually been a door (Billington and Williams, in press). It is difficult now to conceptualize any educational ideas, for example, about learning or behaviour, which escape a shared lineage i.e. that of education and psychology interpolating one another. Whether we think about children's behaviour or the ways in which we construe acts of thinking and learning, educational policy and practice have been synonymous with ideas which might more justifiably be claimed by psychology.

Most obviously, the epistemological foundations for mass schooling in the 20th century were shaped by psychologist-educationalists such as William James and Dewey, E.L. Thorndike and Cyril Burt. While James and Dewey opened up more creative ontological possibilities for education, however, the legacy of the latter pair, one in the US, the other in the UK, were to entice educationalists themselves to accept and encourage non-dynamic models of the human captured within reductionist epistemologies of behaviourism and cognitivism. According to Labaree (2005, p. 279-280), in respect of the purposes of education, 'E.L. Thorndike won and Dewey lost', but this observation should not be reduced to a simplistic psychology versus education contest. Rather Labaree laments the demise of a Deweyan thrust in education and its defeat by forms of intentionality, for example, in respect of the knowledges to be generated and the nature of the persons conceptualized and which, we further suggest here, have become defined as measurable commodities.

We too have been critical of that relationship which continues to exist between education and psychology whenever it leads to social practices which run contrary to our concerns for ontological opportunities, psychosocial justice and well-being. For example, we have rejected the enthusiasm shown by both psychologists and also educationalists for applying psychological theories and norms which merely facilitate the processes of social

exclusion and practices which choose to remain oblivious to their political, social and thus human consequences (Corcoran, 2007). We share with many critics their concern for ways in which psychological theory and practice has compounded the educational disadvantage already suffered by those children who have been politically and economically disadvantaged. However, we would argue that psychology has only been able to achieve this influence through the cynical utilization by educationalists of psychological ideas in order to endorse a range of social practices which, at root, seek to segregate individual young people within their school communities, and on an industrial scale (Billington, 1996, 2000).

Therapeutic education

On face value, purposively questioning how we might better orient to educational practice seemingly connects with current critiques targeting the notion of therapeutic education (Ecclestone & Hayes, 2009; Furedi, 2004). Common to arguments aligned here are concerns for how students or learners are potentially construed in contemporary social policy as innately vulnerable or at-risk of disengaging with education and their communities more generally. In the UK for example, policies connected to the Blair/Brown Labour governments, particularly under *Every Child Matters*, have been condemned as 'the latest manifestation of a long-running tendency in education and social policy to psychologise intractable social and political problems as individual traits that can be remedied through diagnosis and subsequent intervention' (Ecclestone, 2011, p. 93). Criticisms like these are neither unique to the UK nor the early 21st century and can be linked to broader historical concerns regarding the influence of psychological knowledge in modern-day societies (cf. Foucault, 1977; Henriques, Hollway, Urwin, Venn & Walkerdine, 1984; Rose, 1999). In fact, from within the discipline itself, incisive commentary continues to challenge suggestions of theoretical or applied homogeneity (Corcoran, 2014b; Williams, Billington, Goodley & Corcoran, forthcoming; Fox, Prilleltensky & Austin, 2009; Kirschner & Martin, 2010) and subsequently, formal psychological contributions to improving human wellbeing. Nevertheless, as we show below, as an illustration of critical education work, the case for therapeutic education solicits lingering scholarly unease.

Amongst arguments rallying behind the notion of therapeutic education is a contention that emotionality has become a focal point of contemporary educational practice. Ecclestone and Hayes (2009, p. x), argue that a 'therapeutic ethos' has infiltrated Anglo-American culture offering 'a new sensibility, a form of cultural script, a set of explanations and underlying assumptions about appropriate feelings and responses to events, and a set of associated practices and rituals through which people make sense of themselves and others'. Of greatest concern are government attempts to standardise or normalise certain social practices that forefront recognition and expression of emotion. Primarily, such action is occurring in modern societies in response to rising psychological

ill-health and decreasing experiences of wellbeing. In response, schools are today considered optimal sites wherein institutional support can be deployed. Thus, movements to therapeutic education are defined as 'any activity that focuses on perceived emotional problems and which aims to make educational content and learning processes more "emotionally engaging"' (p. x).

An example of the kind of work considered as therapeutic education was the UK government's Social Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) initiative. One of the more vociferous critiques of SEAL came from the Scottish-based Centre for Confidence and Wellbeing's Carol Craig (2007). Apart from condemning deficit-based models of personhood viz. childhood, Craig highlighted several inadequacies said to be associated with contemporary understanding of emotion. One sociocultural condition inherited from psychological theory, which makes initiatives like SEAL seem a necessary response, is the 'hydraulic view of emotion'. According to Craig, this ('western') model of human being deleteriously implores individuals to express or vent emotion or face the consequences of inviting ill health or inappropriate behaviour due to the containment or suppression of emotion. To offer an alternative, Craig highlights cross-cultural (or 'eastern') understandings of emotion that ostensibly do not support the need to express one's emotion to ensure healthy lifestyle. Her argument goes as far as asserting that modern societies are, for all intents and purposes, disrespecting the resilience of young people by suggesting they are in need of institutionalised rehabilitation. How then does Craig suggest we go on? We should, she says, leave well enough alone for 'people have *natural healing mechanisms* which make them resilient. In other words, our minds, just like our bodies, are designed to repair themselves' (p. 63; our emphasis).

We suggest that SEAL gained some momentum in the UK, in part, because of the lack of trust teachers had in the epistemological and ontological frameworks being propagated in education and seized an opportunity to engage alternative models of the human which (admittedly again generated in psychology) began to circulate in schools during the last decades of the 20th century (Corcoran & Finney, 2015). SEAL had something in common with more ancient educational traditions, in which the development of the person in society was a legitimate concern and it also challenged the incompleteness of those earlier versions of the human incorporated within behaviourist and cognitivist psychological paradigms. However, it also served to remind us that any subsequent attempt to re-define the human solely in terms of emotionality too is equally likely to fail.

Rather than attack SEAL, though, we argue here that it is more necessary to remain mindful of those conditions under which it arose and prospered. For SEAL developed as resistance, not only to the incomplete models of the human provided hitherto by behavioural and cognitivist approaches in education but to educational systems which, without any compelling model of the human of their own upon which to rely, were in danger of acceding timorously to those governmental preoccupations which

would reduce all children to the mechanistic models of mind, foreseen during the 19th century. It was not just psychologists or Blairites who supported SEAL but individual teachers too, desperate to see themselves and their protégés, their lives and their learning, as something other than consumers of facts. Just as it had been educationalists who sought to utilize cognitivist and behavioural explanations in order to justify social exclusion, it has also been educationalists who have wanted to resist arid, non-dynamic explanations of the human and instead find ways of connecting with those more complex understandings of human values which might support their relations with actual young people.

Returning to Craig's apprehension, we do have a particular concern with use of a mechanistic metaphor to describe psychosocial human being. More recently this type of discourse has paralleled advancements in computer technologies. As Soyland (1994, p. 99) highlights in his discussion of traditional metaphors used in psychological theory, 'the organism could, on this account, thus be "reprogrammed" to the point at which the problematic emotional behaviour could be altered or completely revised'. Seemingly, mechanical metaphors could be used to argue both sides here. That is, by government initiatives like SEAL to encourage a rebooting of the system (i.e. the individual), as much as it might invoke an age-old expression: if it ain't broke, don't fix it. Nevertheless, of greater interest to our discussion is Craig's use of what might be determined as 'natural'. To promote the idea that our minds are analogous to our bodies is a form of reductionism that equates mind as simply the mechanics of the brain. This position can be debated on several fronts.

Models of mind and brain

As suggested previously, education does not tend to generate its own version of the human but has arguably largely abrogated its responsibility by importing its models from other disciplines. Over the years education has continued to utilize such models from a whole host of epistemological domains, for example, philosophy, religion, psychiatry, politics, psychoanalysis, psychology and the media, and in the process borrowed industrialized discourses of mechanical, computational and lately, as mentioned above, digital models of mind. Most recently, education is having to absorb new discursive repertoires being ushered in from neuroscience. While not equating brains and bodies, Steven Rose (2006, p. 64) does consider there to be an 'intimate connectivity' between them and this is supported by phenomenological philosophers such as Mark Rowlands (2010) in conceptualizations of 'embodied mind'. However, those complex constructions of mind, for example, encapsulated by the '4EA' model of mind (Williams, 2010, after Gallagher, Protevi) are far removed from the biological determinism implicit in Craig's 'natural' and belong to another philosophical tradition which provides the basis for a more sustainable complex scientific engagement (for example, Spinoza, 1989).

Our position accords with understandings of a changing science which attempts to put right the wrongs of psychological and other social sciences which, for example, excluded emotion from studies of the human (with the notable exception of psychoanalysis of course). Once again, both James and Dewey should be exempted from this critique as too should educationalists such as Susan Isaacs (1930). Otherwise educational policies in the Anglo-Saxon world have relied on theories of cognition which have not known how to accommodate what we might consider now to be young people's emotional lives, at least this is so beyond the early years. This has been a cardinal epistemological omission which has had massive implications, not least within psychology and, in particular, for the approach to the prevalent forms of knowledge and learning adopted by education: 'cognitive science is really a science of only part of the mind…it leaves emotion out. And minds without emotion are not really minds at all…' (Le Doux, 1998, p. 25).

It is easy to understand the determination of the proponents of SEAL to resist a narrow cognitivism, especially given claims coming out of neuroscience such as: 'emotion is integral to the process of reasoning and decision-making…' (Damasio 2000, p. 41) and 'the boundaries of cognition are moved so that, in addition to thinking, reasoning and intelligence it also includes emotion…' (Le Doux, 1998, p. 68). There are, of course, many dangers in accepting any new reductionist accounts of the human which are informed by predominantly deterministic biological scripts. These objections have been articulated by critical neuroscientists such as Choudhury and Slaby (2012) but also by more mainstream neuroscientists who are acknowledging the context and limits of their now vast industry, 'neuroscience lets us down. Somehow, bursts of electricity in the wetware of the brain don't seem adequate to the exquisitely structured mind that I, and you, have…' (Tallis, 2008, p. 158).

Many neuroscientific narratives are now constructing dynamic, process-oriented accounts of the human which open up ontological possibilities and which thus transcend the passive forms of mind hitherto envisaged from Descartes onwards (and absorbed by psychologists and educationalists), for example, 'mind is a process not a thing…' (Damasio, 2004, p.183). There is in addition further support from critical neuroscientists for our claim here that educational practice needs to adapt to more dynamic models of mind and brain, and thus learning, which are themselves intrinsically relational, 'The brain is not the sole producer of the mind but a relational organ…' (Fuchs, 2012, p. 341).

Relational being

As emphasised already, the way we orient to educational practice sees such practice as an ongoing series of ontological opportunities presaged by the pursuit of justice in our communities. Inadvertently, arguments against so-called therapeutic education, if not careful about the nature of contemporary sociopolitical conditions, may potentially corrode just intentions:

> *(T)he expansion and recasting of vulnerability reflects a view that resilience as part of wellbeing, and positive affective states in general, are both a human right and a cornerstone of educational and social justice […] even those who object to lack of attention to structural explanations of risk of vulnerability are in danger of being drawn into the discourses offered by psychological accounts, fuelled by perceptions that the nature of "risk" has expanded from specific groups to everyone* (Ecclestone & Lewis, 2014, p. 207-208).

Whilst we share such concerns about the ways in which 'risk' and 'danger' can be ruthlessly exploited politically as a means of infecting our daily lives with dire warnings of 'austerity' or 'terror', these are arguments which need to be handled with caution, not least by those of us who advocate for a social justice agenda within education. Caution must also be taken in approaching arguments that consider all efforts in psychology as potentially uniform.

Gergen (2009) provides an important alternative to psychological cause and effect explanations of daily psychosocial life. He asks us directly whether it is possible, in examining the dynamic flow of human being, to separate what is considered to be cause from its perceived effect. This position shares much with our earlier invocation of Shotter (2011). Gergen sees an inherent logic involved in these statements suggesting that they are mutually defined, existing in a 'confluence' or forms of life in which meanings are embedded, made intelligible and determined. To apply this perspective to our present example, the presence of vulnerability or risk in social policy is overplayed when made responsible for the cultivation of deficit-based views of people. If anything, their proposition does precisely what Ecclestone and Lewis are at pains to suggest is being done by the prevailing conditions they criticise. No doubt, they are onto something seeing a relationship between social policy and psychosocial being but ultimately they under value the potential for individuals and communities to resist such representation. If, in fact, we accept a relational connection between discourse and embodiment – which, we should add, many critical psychologies do - it is because of the way we have oriented to the action taking place. As Gergen (p. 56) says, we become 'congenial within the confluence' of relational action. And so, to underline the point we have been making, it is in and through our orientations to practice that we figure out which steps to take next. These steps, and the movements they enable, always retain a capacity for the extraordinary, including the possibility of enabling alternate psychological theory and practice.

Pathogenic or deficit-based models of personhood should be understood as one confluence amongst many available to us to understand people. How individuals and their communities come to understand meanings connected to health are, following a constructionist line, historically, culturally and relationally determined. We turn to Ungar for an example of how resilience might be known within the extraordinary reciprocal nature of joint action. He notes:

> *A constructionist interpretation encourages openness to a plurality of different contextually relevant definitions of health, offering a critical deconstruction of the power different health discourses carry. Each localised discourse that defines a group's concept of resilience is privileged, more or less depending on the power of those who articulate it. This understanding of resilience, based on discursive power rather than objective measures of health, has implications for the way researchers study resilience and intervene to promote health in at-risk populations* (2004b, p. 345).

We do not disagree with critics of therapeutic education that psychological discourse carries immense power in contemporary societies. However, we also acknowledge the opportunities for people to resist such discourse via the negotiations in which we are each involved in the living of our daily lives. Extending this point, Ungar and Teram (2000, p. 229) recognise: '…regardless of the way they behave (e.g. delinquent or scholarly), youth acquire and maintain a sense of wellbeing by "drifting" toward social discourse in which they exercise some degree of power over the self-defining labels attached to them'. It is not simply labels of vulnerability or risk that require our concerted attention, nor the professional practices of therapy. The final question we address in this section focuses on how we orient to issues of power in the relational conditions of educational practice.

Furedi (2009) makes the case that the exercise of adult authority continues to be eroded by a 'pragmatic and casual orientation towards the intellectual content of education' (p. 83) and the 'institutionalisation of the student voice' (p. 87). His central concern is that educators who are more interested in facilitating student motivation than the delivery of subject-based knowledge have hijacked contemporary educational practice. And because of this, traditional relationships between teachers and students have changed. He asserts: 'All authority relations are hierarchical, and the relation between a teacher and student is no exception. In education, a relationship of inequality founded on the primacy of adult authority is based on the recognition that only grown-ups can be genuinely responsible for the welfare of children and for the world' (p. 69). Our response here parallels the discussion provided above regarding policy-oriented relationships. In both instances we see a form of binary reductionism (i.e. adults/children) that could fail to acknowledge the potential for negotiated and situated processes in social practice. Movements to reductionism simplify the circumstances under examination, for example, that 'only grown-ups can be genuinely responsible for the welfare of children and for the world'. Such an orientation potentially confines us to the kind of psychologized developmentalist discourse upon which many educational practices have too easily relied and which have denied the opportunity to create, for all involved, legitimate forms of social action. For instance, how do we support resistance to psychologizing and psychopathologizing tendencies directed at children which, as advocates for social justice, we must surely subscribe?

Debating whether the control-contest relational binary is a natural condition of human being must remain central to discussions concerning psychosocial justice (Corcoran, 2014a). As Ungar and Teram's (2000, p. 236) Canadian study reported:

> *…both the power and control necessary for feelings of mental health among high-risk youth were often denied by the social institutions that view these young people and their behaviours as maladaptive. When asked to explain what they needed to feel this control, power, and strength, participants focused on one common theme: acceptance.*

Acceptance here signifies the interdependence between experiences of wellbeing and a young person's capacity to influence social discourse and their associated practices. Acceptance here signifies a shift in how adults orient to their relationships with young people. Relational acceptance need not be necessarily defined as interpersonal indifference or complicity. Whilst we do not advocate revolution, we do foresee commitment to promoting psychosocial justice being central to institutional practices like education.

Conclusions

As we have argued, education must continue to be acknowledged as an ontological opportunity. We believe few would disagree and if they did, our disagreement would be, as Wittgenstein suggested, not in opinion but in our form of life (see 2001/1953; no. 241). Governments around the globe want their schools (as well as those commissioned via private or denominational bodies) to prepare a citizenry for active participation in knowledge-based economies. Educational practice in this sense largely shadows the motivating principles of capitalist markets valorising individual accomplishment and competition. Needless to say there are obvious concerns over the sustainability of this model and the way education has become subservient to the power of economics (Sandel, 2012). The current relationship promises greater division between the haves and the have-nots dulling the anticipatory aspirations of the majority in favour of the few.

The pursuit of justice should be second nature (Corcoran, 2009) to how we orient ourselves within/to educational practice because the aged ideals of liberal individualism no longer proffer adequate means by which to go on. Any form of justice premised on reductionist movement struggles to acknowledge difference. And if, as Gergen's (2009) account of second-order morality suggests, our responsibility to relational action lies in our capacity to keep open possibilities to co-create meaning, then it must also be an intentional kind of psychosocial justice that maintains and sustains movement as part of 'a line of thinking' being moved 'down the line' (see earlier references to Wittgenstein and Springsteen). And as Shotter (2012, p. 139) stipulates, 'our actions can only come fully to fruition within socially shared practices that can continue to be articulated and developed over time; to intend an action is to intend a practical world within which actions of that kind can be achieved – no corresponding world, no achievement'.

Reminding us of the temporality of educational discourse, Charles Dickens could again foresee what might happen should education seek, firstly, to deny itself as a form of social action and secondly, to promulgate models of both the human and of human learning which are oblivious to understandings of the kinds of people and societies we would wish to create. The teacher, Thomas Gradgrind, was forced to see the products of his labour, many years after his pupil, Bitzer, experienced his tutelage:

> *'Bitzer,' said Mr Gradgrind, broken down, and miserably submissive to him, 'have you a heart?'*
>
> *'The circulation, sir,' returned Bitzer, smiling at the oddity of the question, 'couldn't be carried on without one. No man, sir, acquainted with the facts established by Harvey relating to the circulation of the blood, can doubt that I have a heart.'*
>
> *'Is it accessible,' cried Mr Gradgrind, 'to any compassionate influence?'*
>
> *'It is accessible to Reason, sir,' returned the excellent young man. 'And to nothing else.'*
>
> *They stood looking at each other; Mr Gradgrind's face as white as the pursuer's.*
>
> *'What motive — even what motive in reason — can you have for preventing the escape of this wretched youth,' said Mr Gradgrind, 'and crushing his miserable father? See his sister here. Pity us!'* (Dickens, 1854, p. 216).

Dickens provides a glimpse of the consequences of educational practices which do not locate their intentionality in human ethics, values and principles. Bitzer, having been subjected to a dystopian educational practice, had such qualities systematically severed from ontological opportunities and thus from his sense of human relatedness. For Bitzer, it was clear, the only way to 'go on' was to do as he had been taught – to ignore what he saw as the irrational pleadings of his patron and to annihilate all in the human that could be considered emotional or relational. Dickens will have been aware of the darkness of his creations and, in his portrayal of a brutal educational setting, acutely aware of the implications of what we might now regard as particular epistemological and ontological conditions. Neither teacher nor pupil could in this case be considered either 'well' or indeed 'educated.'

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From Propositions to Practice
Pedagogy for Life as Process

Kenneth J. Gergen

I hear and I forget, I see and I remember,
I do and I understand.
Confucius, 450 BC

If a visitor from another continent were to ask, "Where would I find the best source of knowledge in your country?:" we might well be inclined to direct them to a university library. After all, in our major centers of learning the library serves as the central repository of what we view as knowledge. And as scholars or scientists, our contributions to knowledge are measured in terms of our inscriptions in the journals and books of these libraries. In effect, we have come to believe that knowledge lies somewhere within the complex configuration of propositions –descriptions, explanations, logics, principles, laws, formulas, and related forms of representation. Such a belief enters into our practices of education. Propositional knowledge centrally figures in lectures and power-points, classroom discussions, and the questions posed in student examinations. We want the emerging generations of students to know about the distance to the moon, the movement of the tides, the number of continents, the importance of Shakespeare, the ideas of Plato, the effects of Pavlovian conditioning, and so on.

To be sure, we might ask why the source of knowledge is not to be found in the activities of people in various walks of life – in doctors' offices, executive board rooms, children's nurseries, machine shops, playing fields, and the like? In part, the answer would be that many these groups are either *applying* knowledge that might otherwise be found in libraries (e.g. medicine), or are *generating* knowledge (e.g. scientific laboratories). In the case of playing fields – and here we could include theaters, orchestras, dance studios and the like – the answer is that these activities do not represent knowledge, but bodily skills. When it comes to education, the chief task is to impart to students the best of what can be articulated. Students are thus positioned to apply such knowledge to their own lives, or to join the cadres of those who produce knowledge.

At least within the Western tradition, the greatest honor is accorded to those who create propositions that approach universality. We value most those propositions that are sufficiently general that they will approximate the truth regardless of time and culture. The law of gravitation, the theory of evolution, and the laws of thermodynamics are illustrative. In this sense, we tend to place greater value on propositions in physics, chemistry, biology, and mathematics, over propositions about cultural life in a mountain

village or predictions of the weather in Vienna. Propositions about ethics, politics, or spiritual life scarcely stand as knowledge at all. Because such propositions are under continuous debate – both historically and culturally – they are typically viewed as matters of opinion. In effect, our educational systems in general are chiefly devoted to imparting timeless knowledge, largely carried in propositional form. Students are primarily evaluated in terms of their mastery of the propositions. And because one can be correct or incorrect regarding such matters, and comparisons are useful for multiple purposes, evaluation is often realized in numerical form and standardized examinations.

Many of the problems stemming from what I am calling propositional education are well known and often discussed. In part, the problems are pedagogical. Propositional knowledge lends itself to the presentation of propositions, whether in terms of organized lectures, power-point demonstrations, or demands for sheer memorization. Students serve as passive receptacles or robotic repeaters (Freire, 1970). Boredom and passive resistance are common. Students are not invited into a conversation; they are simply asked to be listeners. Nor are the materials typically relevant to their lives. Metaphorically, students are required to learn the languages that other cultures employ in carrying out their lives. The result is often that students – even at universities - can see little point in learning outside the fact they will be examined.

There are also problems with the efficacy of education centered on propositional knowing. Research has long demonstrated the rapid and almost total absence of retention of knowledge over time. Nor is it clear how mastery of various bodies of knowledge is linked to subsequent professional life. It is not at all transparent how courses in calculus, Greek civilization, or the history of China, are essential for entering professions of management, medicine, marketing, clothing design, or becoming a stock broker. It's as if an array of random subjects has been designated as "knowledge," within one sector, while an equally random array of "professions" has emerged within another. The relation between the two is virtually indeterminate. Professionally relevant knowledge is typically reserved for post-graduate studies – in schools of medicine, law, dentistry, clinical psychology, management, and so on.

The twin problems of relevance and efficacy are intensified by the rapid changes taking place in cultural life. On the one hand, there is the rapid accumulation and expansion of what can be viewed as propositional knowledge. It is no simply that the number of professional contributions to knowledge has dramatically increased over the decades, but with the availability of the internet, the number of knowledge claims has increased exponentially. This latter expansion has also reduced much that we have defined as basic knowledge to a secondary status. Students today are far less interested in basic physics, chemistry, mathematics, philosophy, and the like than such topics as environmental studies, peace and conflict, film studies, gender studies, and communication technology. Further, with the development of computers and microchip technologies, there are sweeping changes in professional life. Organizations that were

once local now move into the global sphere, face to face business is replaced by on-line transactions, continuous innovation in technology demands continuous changes in such professions as medicine, architecture, and law. Simultaneously, a new entrepreneurial spirit has emerged, and with it a plethora of new professions. How effective, then, is our traditional educational system in preparing students for a world that cannot even be envisioned?

In the present offering I wish to challenge the traditional conception of knowledge as embodied in propositional representations. After exploring major shortcomings I shall introduce what I believe to be a far more promising alternative. This socially based alternative replaces the emphasis on knowledge as given to knowledge in the making. Such an orientation takes on special importance in terms of contemporary world conditions. To challenge the conception of propositional knowledge is also to raise significant questions regarding allied practices and aims of education. Thus, in the final section I will touch on a range of practices more congenial with a socially based vision of knowledge and its utility.

The Social Creation of Knowledge

For the vast share of the 20th century, the abiding concept of knowledge rested on a set of philosophic assumptions, typically identified as empiricist or positivist. There are many variations and tensions among various philosophers and scientists regarding the foundational premises. However, somewhere toward the center of this tradition, it is said to be the primary task of the knowledge maker to carefully and dispassionately observe the world, to develop hypotheses about its functioning, and to test the hypotheses against subsequent observations. Those propositions acquiring support from repeated tests, and withstanding attempts to falsify, are considered candidates for constructing more general theory. Evidence based theory thus constitutes an entry into the domain of knowledge.[1] Theories may compete with each other for acknowledgement as knowledge, but with continuous empirical research, those theories more adequate to nature will win out. We move the progressively toward a condition in which theory is equivalent to truth. Objective truth stands outside fluctuations in opinion, cultural proclivities, religious faith, moral values, and political ideology.

There are four noteworthy aspects of this orientation. First, it is highly *individualist*. The epistemology is that of the single observer experiencing an objectively given nature. It is a tradition that champions the individualist view of heroism – from Galileo and Darwin to Einstein and Feynman. Second it is based on a *representationalist* view of language. That is, it more or less presumes that language functions pictorially.

[1] Mathematics does not qualify, on this account, as a body of knowledge. However, the case is often put forward that systems of mathematics are "discovered," thus placing mathematics in the empiricist camp. On this account, the view that mathematicians are primarily developing "logical tools" – as opposed to discovering foundational truths – is a threat. The distinction between mathematics and statistics enables mathematics to remain a basic subject matter.

On this account, truth is ultimately carried in terms of propositions that have been corrected and improved over time through observation. Third, the vision is inherently *conservative*. On the one hand it more or less presumes a fixed natural world. It is a world that remains sufficiently stable that continuous re-visiting will enable corrections and elaborations of the theoretical network of propositions. It is also conservative in terms of its aim to "fix the truth," essentially to provide the single best –universal and trans-historical – account of what is the case. And finally, this traditional view is value-free. Values (passions, ideologies, moralities) potentially interfere in the process of establishing empirically based knowledge. This also means that discussion of values is principally outside the realm of knowledge making. Dialogues for which empirical evidence does not play a pivotal role are essentially subjective, and in terms of creating knowledge, a waste of resources. This absence of affect include any account of why or for what purposes one might employ the search for knowledge.

Within the past several decades, however, an alternative to the empiricist tradition has emerged, one that challenges virtually all these suppositions. Expanded accounts of this transformation may be found elsewhere,[2] and indeed, the initial chapter of the present volume provides a sufficient enough account that I can move here to contrast its suppositions with the four characteristics just described. In the present context, we view this transformation in terms of social construction. At the outset, the constructionist account replaces the individualist orientation to knowledge with a *relational* view. In this case, it is proposed, the world itself makes no demands of the individual in terms of how it is understood. It is because the individual participates in relational process that he or she begins to understand the world in terms of atoms, chemicals, nervous systems, mental illness, economies, and so on. The scientist studies the world from some perspective, and this perspective is a child of relational process. The representationalist orientation is replaced by a *pragmatic* view of communication. Words themselves do not furnish pictures or maps of an independent reality; one cannot compare an array of propositions to the world to assess their accuracy. Rather, words (and other communicative actions, including gestures, graphs, charts, and so on) are used by participants in the relational process to create, adjust, and sustain their forms of life together.

A constructionist orientation replaces the conservative leaning of the empiricist orientation with a *contextual* vision. Rather than seeking irrefutable propositions, the constructionist understands and appreciates the possibilities of multiple understandings, depending on time, culture, and circumstance. The greater the number of perspectives that can be assembled in a situation, the greater the range of possible actions. Multiplicity and pragmatic potential are allied. Further, in the case of the social sciences, constructionists understand that patterns of social life are held together only by negotiated agreements among people. To presume a stable social world, in which researchers can return to examine the adequacy of their propositions is perilous. Knowledge making

[2] See for example, Gergen (1994), Dickens & Fontana, 1994, Hollinger (1994).

should not be cumulative, but continuous. Finally, where traditional knowledge making attempts to avoid issues of values, morals, and politics, a constructionist orientation sees these as central. Elsewhere I have characterized constructionism as a *reflective pragmatism* (Gergen,2014). That is, knowledge should not be equated with Truth, but with utility. However, utility must be judged in terms of values – useful to whom, and for what purposes. What values are being served by an inquiry, and whose values are they? We cannot separate knowledge from passion.

If we now understand that what we term knowledge is derived from relational process, pragmatic in its aims, embedded within cultural and historical context, and wedded to values, we must begin to ask significant questions about educational practice. Should these practices not embody these very same concerns? Should we not replace the traditional concern with the "individual minds" of students with investments in relational process? Should we not lay the concept of Truth aside in favor of focusing on pragmatic utility? Can we come to appreciate the need for multiple perspectives, linked to culture and circumstance; can we shift from a static to a dynamic view of knowledge and culture? And can we replace the antiseptic orientation to knowledge with passionate pursuit? It is to just such goals that we now turn.

Knowledge as Relational Praxis

To appreciate the educational goals just outlined, it will first be helpful to expand on the social processes from which propositional knowledge emerges. Here we come to appreciate both the utility and shortcomings of propositional knowledge claims. As demonstrated in early works by Fleck (1979) and Kuhn (1962), what we call scientific knowledge typically emerges within communities that share certain assumptions, values, vocabularies, research practices, and research instruments about which they agree. Following Kuhn, one often refers to this agglomerate as a *paradigm*. We find in the work of multiple scholars in the history of science, the social studies of science, and science and technology studies detailed accounts of the conversations, negotiations, manipulations, and cultural influences out of which knowledgeable propositions emerge.[3] Most important to note in these accounts is that the propositions constituting "established knowledge" are the *outcomes of the process*. They represent ultimate formalizations of the discourse developed by the community in carrying out its various activities. Following Wittgenstein (1953) they are samples of a discourse that have acquired their meaning in the ongoing relations among scientists and the materials with which they work, along with the physical and cultural environment in which they function. To the extent that the discourse functions as a picture or mirror, it does so only within this context of usage. The study of aggression, for example, is only objective for those who are willing to label certain observations as aggression. This objectification is tied to – and owes its meaning to - a specific relational process.

[3] See, for example, Latour and Woolgar (1979), Poovey (1998), Daston (2010), Knorr-Cetina (1999).

From this standpoint, we see that what traditional education largely provides is an array of abstractions stripped of their context of usage. They have no truth value save that existing within those communities committed to a given paradigm. Their utility outside these contexts of usage is moot. Abstract propositions in themselves do not carry with them rules from which one can derive a set of observations or actions. Radically put, to teach that "the world is round" is only true or useful within specific contexts of usage. Outside this context, the proposition will not only be empty of content, but will not itself invite any particular course of action. In effect, if the human population were extinct, and creatures from another planet were to find our libraries intact, even with encryption the propositions filling these books would not in themselves permit easy application.

It is not simply that the vast share of propositional knowledge is relatively empty in itself. More significantly, outside the confines of professional schools, the process by which these propositions are generated is generally absent from educational curricula. As I am proposing, propositions do not themselves constitute knowledge. *The words that fill our books and journals are not themselves knowledge, but the secretions of a vital process that otherwise remains invisible. Knowledge in this sense is not to be found in a set of inert passages on a page, but within an active, relational process*. We might appropriately replace the term *knowledge* with *knowledging*. The philosopher Gilbert Ryle (1949) drew a distinction between "knowing how" and "knowing that". "Knowing that" is essentially propositional knowledge of the kind described, while "knowing how" is typically equated with forms physical activity that bring about a desired end. Western educational institutions generally honor the former, while remaining suspicious of the latter. Only reluctantly, and minimally, do universities grant academic credit for skills in athletics, music, art or dance. Yet, from the present standpoint, *knowing that* is essentially a byproduct of *knowing how*. When "knowing that" is cut away from the community of practice, it is robbed of pragmatic value. The propositions are simply constituents of a relational process that serves as the font of knowing. Most important, *we should not look for knowledge in stabilized propositions, but within ongoing relational process.*

There is some precedent for this reconceptualization. In a certain sense, this is to extend Aristotelian concept of knowledge through *praxis*. Aristotle distinguished between the pursuit of knowledge through *theoria* – articulated or propositional truth – and through praxis. The latter is knowledge achieved through the process of striving toward a goal. As I am proposing here, the capacity to articulate theory is itself a practical accomplishment, or the outcome of praxis. Also relevant is the Socratic concept of e*pisteme*, or knowledge embedded in the active accomplishment of a goal, with *techne* representing the craft-like ability to make or perform. In contemporary educational circles the distinction is represented in the contrast between *declarative* and *procedural* knowledge, where the latter is implicit, unformalized, and realized through accomplishment. As often proposed, procedural knowledge is often acquired unconsciously. One might even argue that such knowledge cannot be translated into

propositions. One learns how to speak though conversations, but is not therefore capable of revealing the relevant grammatical rules. Any account of such actions would necessarily be an abstract formalization, for which the skilled particulars would be lacking.[4]

As I am proposing, the chief vehicle for generating usable knowledge is through what may be viewed as a process of relational praxis. The process is relational in the sense that it derives from action within specific contexts, and acquires its significance as knowledge through social interchange.[5] Education dedicated to imparting propositional knowledge not only leaves students with little that is useful outside this context, but fails to immerse them in those relational processes essential for effective engagement in ongoing life. Mastery of content should give way to mastery of process. Let us consider this conclusion in light of contemporary world conditions.

The Challenge of Change

In a fully stable world there are ways in which propositional knowledge can be useful. If the objects of knowledge are relatively fixed, and the communal assumptions and values univocal, the resulting propositions may have certain utility. The mastery of the content may enable students to enter the society with a serviceable discourse. The student will know how to communicate in effective ways, and to rapidly gain some sense of how this talk functions within the community. However, during the preceding century, we have accepted into our ways of life a stunning array of technologies, including the radio, mass transportation, mass publishing, jet transportation, television, the internet, and the cell phone. By all accounts, the impact of such technologies on patterns of cultural life is enormous.[6] The implications for education are significant.

It was once said that there is nothing more revolutionary than a road. With new roads into a community come strangers who bear new ideas, values, and ways of life. But now, in the time required to read this sentence aloud, 80 million email messages will have been launched into the world. In the last year alone it is estimated that 8 trillion text messages were sent via cell phones. And this is to say nothing of the internet, newspapers, television, radio, books, and so on. All these technologies essentially contribute to creating, sustaining, or subverting forms of understanding or belief. Every word or deed can enter multiple spheres of interpretation - twitter, face-book, the blogosphere, television and radio talk shows, and more. Everywhere in motion are

[4] To illustrate, in a recent attempt to impart useful knowledge about dialogic practice, a colleague and I (Hersted and Gergen, 2013) found it impossible to generate propositions from which derivations could be made to the vicissitudes of ongoing dialogue. Rather, it was necessary to furnish case material that could sensitize one to possibilities, and enable relevant reflection.

[5] This is also to challenge the view that knowledge resides in the head, a view more or less championed by cognitive and constructivist views. It is to provide an answer to Wittgenstein's (1992) question, " Would it be correct to say, I sit down because I know this is a chair; I reach for something because I know that this is a book,…What is to be gained by this?" (p.46e)

[6] See for example Berman (1982), Eitzen and Zinn (2011), Bauman (2011).

meanings being shaped and reshaped on virtually every issue of importance to our lives - government, education, religion, family, work, leisure, the economy, love, appearance, and so on. In today's world the circulation of meaning - in volume, speed, and number of participants - approaches staggering proportions.

The utility of propositional knowledge is simultaneously diminished. At the outset, the objects of knowledge continue to shift. As values, opinions, and events unfold across time, so do foci of study. Consider the parade of fluttering concerns: Communism, atomic energy, space exploration, cancer, the AIDs epidemic, computer design, obesity, Alzheimer's, immigration, global warming, social networks, post traumatic stress, Ebola…Enthusiasms rapidly develop, conditions change, and interest dissipates. For what kind of knowledge should education thus prepare the student? There is also the multiplication of perspectives. This means, for one, that the so-called "objects of knowledge" are not the same objects across communities. Global warming is not so much a fact in nature for large numbers of conservatives, as it is a liberal ruse; what is obese in one culture is a sign of either beauty or prosperity in another. More importantly, as perspectives multiply, so do conceptions of reality and rationality increase, but as well the range of possible actions. Thus, to solidify and canonize "what is known" is to reduce the potentials for action. For whose perspective should education thus prepare the student?

An education concerned with inert, context-stripped content is largely irrelevant to a world in flux. Required are skills in the continuous relational praxis.

Pedagogies of Practice-Based Knowledge

What does this mean for educational practices and policies? This is a question of enormous proportion, and deserving of broadest discussion.[7] As a preliminary to such discussion, I shall confine myself here to briefly touching on several avenues of departure. Because forward-looking educators have already set out in these directions, they offer special promise.

Collaborative Classrooms

I have placed special emphasis on processes of collaboration, largely because it is out of relational process that human meaning is born, that values and rationalities are formed. It is collaborative process, then, that should be a foundation of educational practice.[8] It is no longer the individual student that should center our concern, but participation in the relational process from which knowledge emerges. In this context initiatives in collaborative learning are especially promising. Collaborative activities are now available across all age levels and curricula. At the university level, the work of

[7] A more extended discussion may be found in Gergen (2009).

[8] See also initiatives in cooperative learning (Millis, 2010).

English Professor Kenneth Brufee (1993) is illustrative. In his English classes, Brufee establishes *consensus groups.* These groups are challenged to answer various questions about a text, and to do it in their own terms. They are also invited to challenge the opinions of various authorities in the field. However, the groups must reach a consensus that they are willing to share with other groups. This means that the group must learn how to deal with internal disagreements – sometimes extreme – in generating an opinion. They must learn how to live together in a world of conflicting realities. Closely related are movements toward dialogically based teaching (Wells,1999). Such practices have become increasingly useful as classes become increasingly multi-cultural. They can provide an opportunity for full democratic participation. Ideally they also give students an opportunity for a wide range of expressions – from what they think about a subject to personal experiences, opinions, humor and so on. In this way students' lives are brought into productive contact with each other.

Learning in Action

As Confucius wrote in the fifth century BC, "I see and I remember, I do and I understand." This view is also echoed in John Dewey's (1938) trail-blazing theories of education, and is especially relevant to the proposals set forth in this paper. Most relevant here is Dewey's emphasis on the learning experience within specific contexts of action. As just proposed, one of the most important features of this context is the matrix of social relations in which learning takes place. It is within these relations that the learning experience acquires its value, its goals, and a vocabulary with which it can be communicated to others. In effect, experiential learning is at one with relational or collaborative praxis. Most importantly, learning by doing places the learning experience itself as the subject matter. That is, the primary educational outcome is the mastering of the process itself. It is the skill in learning within the ongoing and ever shifting landscape of demands that is essential. For example, skills in knowing how to focus attention, employ trial and error, innovate, and integrate information are potentially useful resources across a broad terrain of challenges.

Pursuits in *experiential based learning* have continued to develop in both theoretical sophistication and the range of relevant practices (see for example, Wurdinger and Carlson, 2010; Beard and Wilson, 2013). Interest also expands globally.[9] The movement is often allied, as well, with *project-based learning*. In project-based learning students are often engaged in generating the goals, and these goals will often have value for them (for example, helping the community to recycle, advocating new bike paths, reducing bullying). Collaborative process is often integral to the practice. Closely related to these endeavors is the work of *activity theory* scholars and teachers. Drawing from early Russian work, activity theory places a strong emphasis on working with tools – for example, computer technologies, and ambient discursive resources –to solve problems

[9] See, for example, the Association for Experiential Education (www.aee.org)

(see, for example, Engeström, 1987; Lave, 1993). The recent flowering of *action research* and *arts based learning* in higher education adds additional dimension to these various efforts.

Schools Without Borders

It's not only that the sites of knowledge making can rapidly emerge at any time and place throughout the world. With existing communication technologies, cyber-sites can instantaneously develop, linking the like-minded across cultural borders. Regardless of whether the interests are technological, ideological, artistic, pleasureful, sportive, and so on, there are people from around the world seeking together to achieve some end. They will learn – or not – through relational praxis. In this context we must view the structured containers in which education traditionally takes place as impediments to education. To the extent that they define the perimeters within which learning occurs, they insulate students from participating in the larger global flows of meaning making that will only continue in their expansion and significance. To be sure, educators have made great strides in opening the schoolhouse doors. Programs in work-based learning, service learning, and studying abroad, along with apprenticeships, externships, practica, and field trips, increasingly populate the educational scene.

Of course, the increasing developments in computer based learning, and on-line degree programs lend themselves to thinking in terms of education without borders. So far, however, most such educational programs favor propositional pedagogy. It's the content that counts. More promising are computer classrooms in which students may congregate and collaborate. Increasingly educators are relying on computer technology to enable students to carry out dialogue, share files, and work on projects together – effectively realizing the goals of collaboration and action learning just discussed. Through such practices as building websites to linking classrooms across cultures, these initiatives are slowly enabling classrooms to "go global."

Transforming Evaluation

When relational process is given priority, evaluating individual student performance is thrown into question. Here it is first important to realize that measures of student performance are not accurate pictures of the student, but constructions. They are ways of characterizing the student from a particular standpoint. In this sense, *evaluations of students tell us less about the students than they do the standpoint of the evaluator*. In this light we may ask: who is doing the evaluating, and for what purposes? In whose interests are these evaluations, and who is – or is not – included in the discussion about these purposes. What stands as "objective assessment" for one may be "prejudice in action" for another. There is longstanding debate on these issues, and substantial critiques of traditional evaluation practices. Most significant for present purposes is the way in which evaluation generates alienated relationships – between teachers and students,

among students, and between students and their families. In effect, the very relational processes central to praxis-based knowledge are undermined. [10]

From the present standpoint, a high priority must be placed on developing alternatives to traditional evaluation practices. There are broad moves in this direction, particularly in higher education. Forward-looking universities are offering more opportunities for ungraded credit, and replacing examinations with dossier based evaluation. I have also been struck by the potentials of *dialogic evaluation* (Ryan & DeStefano, 2000; Schwandt, 2005). Such practices tend to emphasize egalitarian dialogue, equality and justice, multi-cultural intelligences, dialogic learning, and qualitative analysis as opposed to quantification. Closely related, I am drawn to practices of *appreciative evaluation* (Preskill & Catsambas, 2006). Such practices are lodged within a social constructionist premise that we create our realities through dialogue. Thus, dialogues that center on *problem*s – for example, the poor performance of students, teachers, or school systems – solidify the reality of the problems. And when fortified, this reality will lead to mutual blame, alienation, distrust, disrespect, lowered motivation, and more. The appreciative approach centers discussion on valued actions or performances, that is, what may be prized by the participants.

Alternatives to national testing practices are also needed. Here I am impressed by the work of David Fetterman and Wandersman (2004, 2007) on empowerment evaluation. Here the attempt is to shift the site of evaluation from the distant assessors to the local participants. Rather than the impersonal assessment of students and teachers, the attempt is to enable the local community to become self-directing, to deliberate on its activities, set goals for itself, and take necessary actions. Outside testing procedures are not eliminated. Rather, standardized tests can provide information helpful in judging local progress. Rather than dictating policy, test scores become adjuncts to local school development.

In Conclusion

I am advocating here a fundamental shift in our conception of knowledge, its utility, and its acquisition. It is a shift from knowledge as carried by fixed representations of the world to knowledge as embedded in ongoing, relational practice. Knowledge in this sense is not located in any place – in individual minds, books, or computer files – or in any temporal location. Knowledge is continuously realized in the active process of making, or what I am calling here, relational praxis. Such a view is linked to an emerging and widely shared vision of knowledge as socially constructed, and the attendant shift from truth seeking to pragmatic utility. It is also a view that seems maximally congenial with the increasingly rapid tempo of global life, and its demands and opportunities for adjustment and innovation. In this light I have touched on some of what I consider more promising pedagogical initiatives. Further dialogue is essential.

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[10] For a more extended discussion of this critique, see Gergen and Dixon-Roman, 2014.

It is important that one does not conclude from this offering that I am in any way opposed to propositional knowledge. The questions primarily concern the conditions of its utility, and the significance of what is marginalized through this romance. When propositions (in their various forms) are stripped from their contexts of usage, their educational value is diminished and their pedagogical potency impoverished. Within the context of efforts to achieve value-invested goals, propositional discourse can be vital. However, for educational purposes, let us place the emphasis on "the efforts, and not the outcomes. The argument here may be clarified in confronting what may strike many readers as a pervasive, but suppressed, irony in this account.

I have been consistently critical of the propositional account of knowledge, while simultaneously offering to the reader an array of propositions. I have relied on the representationalist tradition to offer an account of the contemporary state of affairs. Further, I have tried to fortify many of my proposals with reference to other propositional accounts of the world. It would seem that either I am wrong about the weaknesses of propositional knowledge, or my account is self-defeating. Yet, such a critique would be to equate propositional knowledge with language as relational action. In no way am I attempting to fix the truth of my proposals; they are offered as entries into an ongoing conversation with other educators. The words will hopefully find pragmatic utility in the working contexts that we share. At the same time, because there are – and will be – multiple perspectives at stake in this conversation, and multiple contexts of potential application, it is a dialogue without end. My special hope is that we should create useful but transient knowledge together in the process.

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Dialogic learning

Talking our way into understanding

Gordon Wells

My aims in this chapter are first, to make the case for the foundational role that dialogue plays in the creation and development of knowledge, both individual and societal, and then to explore ways in which a dialogic approach can improve learning and teaching in schools and universities. To these ends, I shall start by briefly summarizing recent work in a variety of academic fields that provides both arguments and evidence for the active and interactive nature of learning, with dialogue being essential for human learning. I shall next draw on studies of early child development to illustrate how knowledge-building dialogue plays a critical role in children's learning in the preschool years but occurs much less commonly in formal educational settings. Finally, based on my collaborative action research with teachers, I shall suggest ways in which classrooms at all levels can create more effective opportunities for learning by treating knowledge as being jointly constructed through dialogue among students and acknowledged experts, mediated by the planning and supportive guidance of teachers who, themselves, are also learners.

Vygotsky (1981) was convinced that all human psychological processes develop out of collaborative social forms of interaction, using cultural tools – most importantly language – to transform the world rather than passively adapt to it. However, while language played a central role in his theory, he considered it to be part of a more comprehensive, unified psychological system that combined affective, practical, social, motor, and symbol-based semiotic processes that function together to enable individuals to participate in the wide range of meaningful activities that relate them to other people and to the world they inhabit. In his theory, therefore, individual development is seen as the process of entering into an ongoing culture through participation in collaborative shared activities with more experienced members of the culture and, in this way, of gradually appropriating its tools, both material and psychological, as well as the modes of action and thinking that they make possible.

It was in relation to this context of shared activity that Vygotsky (1978) introduced the metaphor of the zone of proximal development. Based on his research on the assessment of normal and abnormal children,[1] he explained that, when a learner is attempting to carry out some intended activity but cannot manage it completely on his or

[1] See Gita Vygodskaya's brief biography of her father.
(http://webpages.charter.net/schmolze1/vygotsky/gita.html)

her own, a more experienced co-participant can, by offering relevant assistance in the form of hints or demonstration, enable the learner "to go beyond him- or herself" by taking over the new skill or knowledge and ultimately making it her or his own.

This process is very much in evidence in the early stages of a child's development as, for example, when a parent tracks an infant's visual attention to an object and, if appropriate, picks it up and offers it to him or her, often saying the word or words that name the relevant object or action (Trevarthen & Hubley, 1978). It is equally in evidence, in the second year, when the adult expands on the child's verbal expression of interest in an ongoing event.

Here is an example from the Bristol Study of Language Development (Wells, 1986).

Mark, aged 22 months, is standing by a central heating radiator in the living room.

Mark: *'Ot, Mummy?*
Mother: *Hot? . yes, that's the radiator*
Mark: *Been- burn?*
Mother: *Burn?*
Mark: *Yeh*
Mother: *Yes, you know it'11 bum, don't you?*
Mark: [putting hand on radiator] *Oh! Ooh!*
Mother: *Take your hand off of it*

[Looking out of the window, a few minutes later, Mark sees a man working in his garden]

Mark: *A man's fire, Mummy*
Mother: *Mm?*
Mark: *A man's fire*
Mother: *Mummy's flower?* [checking]
Mark: *No*
Mother: *What?*
Mark: *[*emphasizing each word*] Mummy, the man . fire*
Mother: *Man's fire?* [checking]
Mark: *Yeh*
Mother: *Oh yes, the bonfire*
Mark: *(imitating) Bonfire*
Mother: *Mm*
Mark: *Bonfire . oh, bonfire . bonfire . bon- a fire . bo-bonfire*
Oh, hot, Mummy . oh, hot . it hot . it hot
Mother: *Mm . it will burn, won't it?*
Mark: *Yeh . burn . it burn*

Such brief conversations are most often initiated by the child, as the linguist, Halliday (1975), noted in his account of his own son's early development. However, while it is the child who chooses the topic, it the adult who scaffolds the conversation by building on what the child offers and in this way extends the joint meaning making and

creates opportunities for the child to incorporate the new information into his expanding linguistic repertoire and, at the same time, to extend his understanding of the topic in which she or he is currently interested.

This is clearly seen in the following extract.

Elizabeth, aged 4 years, is watching her mother clean the wood ash from the living room fireplace.

Elizabeth: What are you doing that for?
Mother: I'm gathering it up and putting it outside so that Daddy can put it on the garden.
Elizabeth: Why does he have to put it on the garden?
Mother: To make the compost right.
Elizabeth: Does that make the garden grow?
Mother: Yes.
Elizabeth: Why does it?
Mother: You know how I tell you that you have to eat different things like eggs and cabbage and rice pudding to make you grow into a big girl?
Elizabeth: Yes.
Mother: Well, plants need different foods too. And ash is one of the things that's good for them.

As in the previous example, it is the child who initiates the topic. However, Elizabeth is older than Mark and more advanced both linguistically and cognitively. Observing her mother's action and assuming it has a purpose, she asks questions in order to elicit an explanation, which her mother supplies in a manner that she believes will make sense to Elizabeth in terms of her existing knowledge. For the mother, the action she is performing is part of a more comprehensive activity. That is to say, the wood ash is not simply a 'thing in itself,' it is also something that has value in the activity of growing plants, in which, as a type of fertilizer, it can contribute to their growth. To explain this, she uses an analogy based on the concept of nutrition: just as Elizabeth needs to eat certain types of food in order to grow, so a plant's growth is dependent on appropriate 'food' and the ash her father will spread on the soil will help the garden plants to grow.

Both these examples illustrate how spontaneously occurring events can be occasions for learning when the child initiates the dialogue and the more experienced interlocutor responds to the child's interest by building on it in a manner that he or she believes will enable the child to advance in his or her 'zone of proximal development' as a member of the culture in which he or she is growing up.

There are, of course, wide variations in the manner in which such learning occurs, both across cultures and also within cultures, depending on societal and familial traditions. Cultural anthropologists have reported very different patterns of childrearing in less technologically developed cultures. For example, in some cultures, young children

are cared for by older siblings rather than by their parents (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986) and Rogoff (2003) describes how Maya children are expected to learn mainly through observation and participation in family and community activities. But even in developed countries there are differences in patterns of parent-child interaction stemming from cultural and class differences in beliefs about child rearing (Heath, 1983; Hasan, 1986), which Bernstein (1986) attributed to parents' roles in the division of labor, being involved either in material production or in symbolic control.

However, in all cultures, whatever the local customs, children have multiple opportunities to learn the language of their community, for talk accompanies almost all the activities in which children engage with family members and, as they grow older, with other children and adults outside the home. While there is much repetition of daily routines, there are also new experiences and new twists to those that are already familiar. As a result, and with little deliberate instruction, by the age of five or so, children have learned how to play their part in a wide range of activities and how to use language to get things done and to reflect on these doings. By that age, they have mastered the basic grammar of the language used in their community[2] and have acquired a vocabulary of many thousands of words and they continue to add to these resources on a daily basis as they engage in interactions in new contexts.

Writing about this learning process more generally, Halliday (1993) emphasizes the significance of these everyday dialogic interactions for children's intellectual as well as their linguistic development. In learning their native language, he argues, children take over their culture's ways of making sense of human experience, as this is 'encoded' in the utterances that accompany their activities with others. As he puts it, 'Language has the power to shape our consciousness; and it does so for each human child, by providing the theory that he or she uses to interpret and manipulate their environment' (p.107).

Dialogue and the Creation of Knowledge and Understanding

So far in this chapter, I have tried to establish, first, that, universally, learning involves an active engagement with the world outside the self and that, second, humans learn mainly through actively engaging in situation-related dialogue with other people. For many thousands of years, knowledge created in one generation was almost exclusively passed on to future generations by involving novice members in family and community activities so that, through physical and linguistic participation, they took over and made the community knowledge their own. Furthermore, when situations arose that posed challenges that went beyond current members' knowledgeable skills, individuals pooled their resources, attempting through collaborative action and dialogue to construct solutions, which if effective, would in turn be passed on to future generations.

In the last two thousand years, however, two highly significant additions have been

[2] It is worth pointing out that, in many societies, children learn two or more languages simultaneously.

made to humans' cultural resources of knowledge and skills. The first was the development of ways of giving permanent representation to the knowledge that had previously required face-to face interaction for its dissemination. The invention of writing, in particular, radically changed the ways in which knowledge was preserved and extended. With access to texts created by knowledgeable experts in distant times and places, the pace of knowledge creation and dissemination increased. Secondly, as knowledge developed by communities such as those of philosophers, scientists, navigators, doctors, historians and so on, gradually came to be applied to practical problems, it gave rise to increased control of the physical environment through mechanical tools, their production and application.

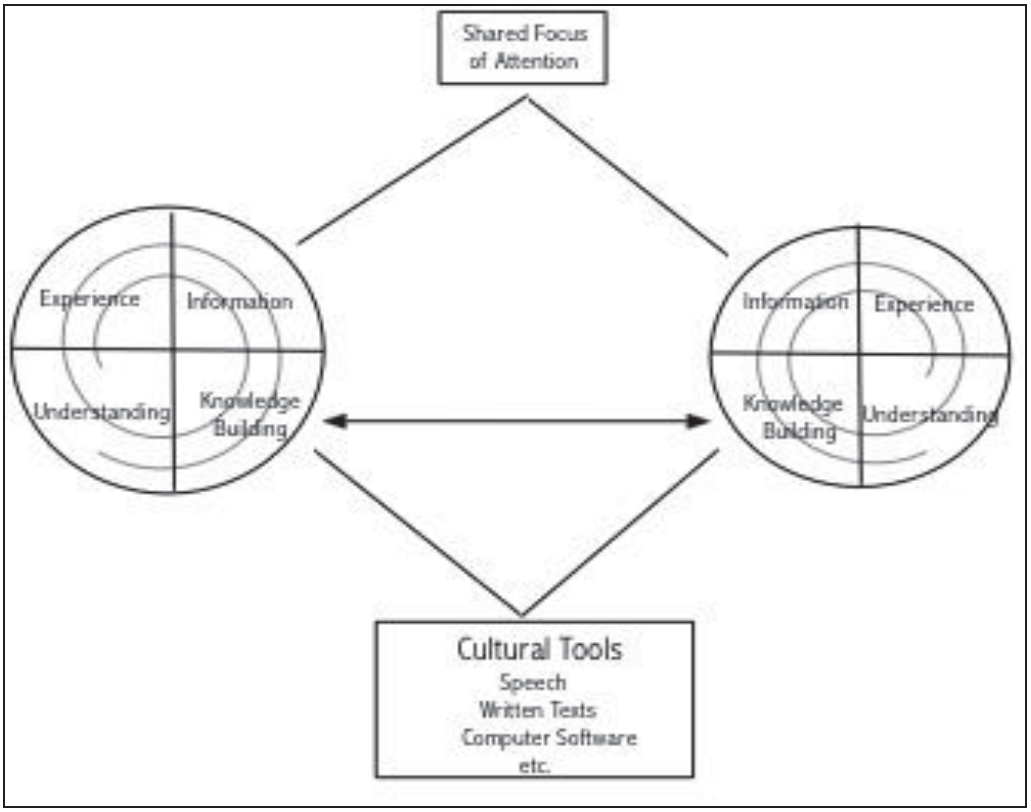

Figure 1. *The Spiral of Acting, Knowing and Understanding*

At this point, I shall attempt to summarize the significance for individual development of the ideas so far presented about learning through action and dialogue in the form of a diagram. In it, I represent two individuals taking part in some activity together. Each circle represents one of the participating individuals and the four quadrants within each circle represent essential components of what is involved in engaging in any challenging activity. Because all activities are situated in space and time, each occurrence is to some degree unique and thus for each participant some aspects of the current instantiation will be already familiar while some will be new. The component labeled 'Experience' represents memories of relevant past events that enable the individual to recognize what is familiar about the current situation, while his or her active

engagement in it, through one or more of the senses and through physical action, yields new 'Information' in the form of feedback. However, for this new information to lead to an enhancement of 'Understanding' - which is the goal of all useful learning – it must be actively transformed and articulated with past experience through collaborative 'Knowledge Building' (Scardamalia & Bereiter, 2006). While the cycle through the quadrants represents one particular occasion, the spiral that connects the quadrants emphasizes the continuous nature of learning, both on any particular occasion and progressively over time.

The diagram is thus intended to represent two individuals who are engaging with the same object, which can be understood as both the object-goal of their joint action (what they are trying to achieve) and a physical object or ongoing event. However, while this object is the shared focus of their attention, their individual perceptions of it will not be identical because they will be construing it in the light of their individual past experiences. This is where knowledge building comes into play, as they make use of material and/or linguistic cultural tools to negotiate their understanding of the object/goal and the action(s) that may need to be taken in order to achieve it.

Where the individuals involved have very different levels of understanding of the object and different levels of facility with the cultural tools relevant to the situation, the more competent can assist the less competent one to play his or her part in their joint action, thus –as Vygotsky (1978) argued– enabling him or her to make progress in the zpd. This could be seen happening in the two examples quoted above, where in each case the mother attempted, by means of her verbal explanation, to help the child to understand more fully the events that were of interest to them.

Two further points that this diagram is intended to bring out are, first, that because of their unique life trajectories, the understandings that different individuals construct are never identical. This is one of the reasons why collaborative knowledge building is so important, since it allows each participant to compare his or her understanding with those of co-participants and for each to recognize the strengths and weaknesses of his or her own current position and to modify them accordingly. While such dialogic work probably starts most frequently in spoken interaction with a co-present other, it need not end there. By reading, we can also dialogue with non-present others – even those no longer living – by engaging with their written words. As children grow older, they also become able to dialogue with themselves in what Vygotsky (1987) called "inner speech" and, later, in the activity of writing, to explore their thinking for themselves as well as to communicate their thinking to other people.

Having established the centrality of dialogue in learning at all stages of the life-span, I shall focus, in the remainder of this chapter, on implications of the foregoing ideas for learning in schools and in public education more generally.

Learning in School: The Bristol Study

Given the importance that dialogue plays in everyday life and, most particularly, in the early years, it might be expected to be equally effective in facilitating learning in school. However, this is by no means always the case, as became very apparent when we followed 32 of the children in the Bristol Study into their first classrooms (Wells, 1986) With no clear expectations, we decided to make a direct comparison between the talk that occurred at home on or around the children's fifth birthdays and then a few weeks later at school. For each child, ten five-minute samples were recorded over the course of one morning and all data involving any adult interacting with the child were analyzed on a number of dimensions. Not surprisingly, the children had considerably less one-to-one conversation with their teachers than with adults at home, since the adult-child ratio was very different in the two settings. But even when such conversations with adults occurred, they were much less frequently child-initiated. Furthermore, compared with at home, their contributions were much shorter and less complex; the children asked far fewer questions at school, and those they did ask were mainly about what they were supposed to do rather than about things that interested or puzzled them. By contrast, the teachers asked many more questions than did adults at home, with questions-with-known-answers being seven times more frequent in the classroom than at home.

However, what was most disturbing was the difference between the two settings in the extent to which adults built upon the children's contributions to the ongoing conversation when responding to them. When a comparison was made between those adult utterances that picked up and extended matter contributed by the child (extending utterances) and those that developed matter previously introduced by the adult (developing utterances), a very significant difference was found. Whereas at home twice as many adult utterances were extending rather than developing, the ratio was reversed in the classroom, where teachers developed matter introduced by themselves twice as often as they extended matter contributed by the children.[3]

Here is a fairly typical example of conversation between a teacher and child, in this case initiated by the child.

Lee has found a large conker (a horse chestnut), which he hopes will be successful in the sport in which a child tries to break his opponent's conker by hitting it hard with his own. He has brought his conker to show it to his teacher.

Lee: I want to show you .. isn't it big!

Teacher: It is big, isn't it? What is it?

Lee: A conker

Teacher: Yes

Lee: Then that'll need opening up.

Teacher: It needs opening up . what does it need opening up for?

[3] Similar results were reported by Tizard et al. (1983), based on a comparison of four-year-olds' talk with mothers and teachers.

Lee: Cos the seed's inside
Teacher: Yes, very good . what will the seed grow into?
Lee: A conker
Teacher: No, it won't grow into a conker. it'll grow into a sort of tree, won't it?
Can you remember the –
Lee: Horse chestnut
Teacher: Horse chestnut good.
Put your conker on the nature table, then.

I have quoted this example at some length because it illustrates rather clearly the dilemma experienced by teachers in the face of the conflicting demands placed upon them – to teach the prescribed curriculum on the one hand, and to be responsive to individual children's interests and their current understandings on the other. From the first perspective, the teacher's intention here could be seen as praiseworthy – to help Lee to extend his interest more reflectively by making the connection between his conker and the type of tree it came from and into which it would eventually grow. On the other hand, however, it could be argued that, by pursuing her well-intentioned instructional interrogation, she hijacked Lee's initial topic; instead of being able to share his excitement with his teacher about what he was going to do with the conker, he was reduced to providing short answers to her questions, to which, of course, she already knew the answers.

In the mid 1970s, when this episode was recorded, significant attempts had been made in England to adopt a child-centered approach to the education of young children, inspired by Piaget's (1970) theory of learning. In the same period there was also a serious attempt to abolish the universal 11+ examination, the purpose of which was to segregate children at this age into two types of school, oriented to academic or manual skills, based on current achievement, and instead to create comprehensive schools that would avoid early stratification by educating all students together during the secondary stage of education while appropriately cultivating their differing interests and abilities.

However, while these 'liberal' initiatives met with considerable approval at the time and had some lasting effect, the more 'traditional' values and concerns of conservative politicians and business leaders gradually prevailed and, over the following years, led to the establishment of a prescribed common curriculum for all students and a growing emphasis on standardization of assessment. Similarly, the increasing globalization of manufacturing and trade and the need to be competitive in it led to the adoption of comparable practices by most economically and technologically developed nations and to a growing extent by developing ones as well.

Standardization and Students' Learning

There is nothing new about the subservience of schooling to the needs of economic production and management. The first schools were set up in the ancient kingdoms and

empires of Egypt, Mesopotamia and, later, China, to train scribes to keep records for the administration of taxation, trade and military supplies. In these schools, the required skills in reading, writing and basic arithmetic were what was taught and the learning and teaching took the form of supervised repetitive practice of these skills by students sitting in rows facing a single teacher (Cole, 2005). In more modern times, with the Industrial Revolution, the need for basic schooling again became apparent and, in many industrializing countries, school attendance was eventually made obligatory for all, with the goal of training a semi-literate, semi-skilled workforce to man the factories that were replacing the individual craftsmen in their workshops and the women spinning and weaving at home. As Cole remarks, the schools of the nineteenth and early twentieth century were remarkably similar in layout and curriculum to the earliest known school, which was recently excavated in what was ancient Sumeria.

However, during World War 1 the inadequacy of the education provided by public schools was made clearly apparent by the proportion of conscripted soldiers who were illiterate, which, in turn, led to a strengthening and enlargement of the curriculum in the years that followed. However, with the suddenly increased need for military vehicles, guns and ammunition, the war also gave a strong boost to the mechanization of production and to the economic advantage of the assembly line and quality control. And over the decades that followed, these concepts were transferred to public education, leading to the establishment of state or national curricula, which specify the standards to be achieved in each subject at each age/grade level and the use of standardized tests, typically involving multiple choice questions, both to assess individual students' achievement relative to curriculum goals and also to monitor the degree of success in achieving these goals by school districts and schools and, more recently, by individual teachers. By the end of the twentieth century this approach had achieved international proportions, as seen in the establishment of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA).

Several advantages have been claimed for this top-down management of education. Setting universal high standards, it is argued, creates equity of opportunity for all students, wherever they live, and the large-scale production of textbooks and test materials also permits economies of scale. Furthermore, frequent standardized testing yields feedback to teachers and students on how successful they are in meeting expectations and, with some tests, on exactly where improvement is needed. Test results can also be used to make comparisons between teachers, schools, school districts, and states, enabling each level to be held accountable to the level next above and sanctioned if they fail to make required improvements.

However, the move towards the production model of education has not gone unchallenged. One major objection is that, without recognizing and attempting to overcome the economic inequalities between schools and school districts as well as the substantial differences between them in the populations they serve, contemporary

schooling is inequitable and it is extremely unlikely that its desired outcomes can be achieved. An equally important objection is that the assumptions about pedagogy on which this model is based are seriously in conflict with the findings of research on the nature of successful learning and effective teaching.

Perhaps the most serious problem caused by such standardization is that the drive to improve test scores comes to be the dominating concern of both teachers and students. A consequence is that students quickly recognize, from the way in which their contributions in class are responded to, that 'getting the right answer' is the real goal of learning, and so they put their efforts into memorizing the information that is likely to be on the test rather than into exploring and trying to understand the topics they are studying. Furthermore, since the amount that can be held in memory is limited, once the tests have been taken, the memorized information is likely to be deleted in order to make room for the next unit's key information. At the end of the year, students who have used this strategy remember little of what they have 'learned' and, in many cases, understand even less.

The test regime has two further harmful consequences. First, the high value put on test scores and grades fosters competition rather than collaboration and this, in turn, works against group work and sustained class discussion, in which alternative perspectives are explored and given serious consideration. Second, all students are expected to 'learn' at the same rate and in the same manner. As a result, there is no room to offer alternative assignments or make other adjustments in order to respond to individual differences in learning style, and other pertinent characteristics. Furthermore, when all must go at the same pace, those who learn quickly may easily become bored, while those who need more time and assistance get left behind, often losing hope and simply accepting their poor test performances as evidence that they are failures.

Teachers, too, are constrained by the standardization of curriculum and the emphasis on students' test performances. Many feel that their expertise in crafting appropriate curriculum for their particular students is not valued, since the selection of content and its sequencing is taken out of their hands. Furthermore, the sheer quantity of material to be 'covered' does not allow them to discover and build on students' relevant experiences or be responsive to their individual interests. In the US, in inner-city school districts and in those with a high proportion of English language learners, teachers are further constrained by pacing guides and even by an explicit script which specifies in detail what they should cover, and by what means, for every moment of the day. While some teachers may welcome the resulting freedom from having to prepare lessons, many who find themselves required to teach in this way resent the deskilling to which they are subjected and a substantial number of them leave teaching altogether, thus rendering it even less likely that the aim of raising standards will be achieved.

However, of the negative consequences of imposing standardization of instruction, the most damaging is the effect it has on the interactions between teachers and students –

and also among students – through which the lesson-by-lesson and moment-by-moment shared process of learning-and- teaching is carried on. As studies have repeatedly found (e.g. Mehan, 1979; Nystrand, 1997), most lessons consist mainly of teachers presenting information and then asking questions to check that students can recall what they have been told. In such classrooms, students are rarely invited to ask questions or to offer their ideas about the topic being taught and there is little sustained discussion of any kind. In sum, learning is not dialogic. As a result, students often do not engage fully with the topic of the lesson and gain only a superficial understanding of it.

Fortunately, however, as was pointed out earlier, most of our productive learning takes place outside classroom lessons, in settings that involve collaborative dialogue more often than unidirectional instruction. It seems clear, therefore, that learning in school would be greatly facilitated if the skills involved in dialogic learning at home and in the community were also valued and utilized in the classroom. Indeed, Lauren Resnick advanced this argument as long ago as 1984 in her Presidential Address to the American Educational Research Association.

> *[S]chool itself should not retain all the features that distinguish it so sharply from practical life. Indeed, evidence is beginning to accumulate that traditional schooling's focus on individual, isolated activity, on symbols correctly manipulated but divorced from experience, and on decontextualized skills may be partly responsible for the school's difficulty in promoting its own in-school learning goals* (1984, p. 18).

In the remainder of this chapter, therefore, I shall explore some of the ways in which dialogue can be made more central to learning in school. First, though, I will consider in more detail what it means for learning to be dialogic.

Dialogic Learning in the Classroom

The four components – Experience, Information, Knowledge Building and Understanding – are involved in any interaction between two or more people, whether the Object is a physical object or situation or one created through their recall or imagination. Much interaction in daily life is not engaged in with the deliberate intention of bringing about learning – although that does not mean that no learning occurs. In school, on the other hand, learning on the part of students is the *raison d'être* for much of the interaction that takes place during formal lessons. Nevertheless, while all school subjects confront students with new information, there is considerable variation in the ways in which they are expected to engage with that information and in the criteria by which the outcome of their engagement will be judged.

Writing about spoken interaction, Bakhtin (1981) made a distinction between 'authoritative' and 'internally persuasive' discourse, seeing the former as asserted and requiring acceptance as compared with the negotiability of the latter. Writing somewhat later in the Bakhtinian tradition, Lotman (1988) used the terms 'monologic' and

'dialogic' to make a similar distinction. As he explained, the monologic function is particularly important for passing on cultural meanings and 'providing a common memory for the group' (p. 35), thus preserving the continuity and stability of beliefs and values within a culture. However, by the same token, an utterance (or written text) treated in this way is by nature authoritative, not open to question or alternative perspectives.

In the second mode, by contrast, the utterance invites a response from the addressee's position, which may refine, extend, or counter that of the speaker. In this way, as he makes clear, it serves to generate new meanings. An utterance treated in this mode is truly dialogic, in Bakhtin's sense. And because it assumes that thinking is thinking together, it is ideally suited to a commitment to taking different positions into account in the attempt to determine what is the case or what course of action should be followed. Moreover, for those who have learned to take part in such constructive consideration of different perspectives, this social form of thinking can be taken over as a model for private thinking, as each move in inner dialogue serves as a thinking device that elicits a further rejoinder.

This distinction is particularly important when considering interaction in the classroom. When teaching takes the form of presenting information, either through lecturing or requiring students to read a written text, and then asking questions about the presented information that call for correct recall, the lesson is essentially monologic and authoritative. No opportunity is provided for students to respond to the presented information with their own thoughts about it or to ask questions about its significance for their own lives. As a result, the information remains inert and does little to increase their understanding of it. On the other hand, if the aim of teaching is to enable students to extend their understanding of the content of the lesson, there must be opportunities for them to engage in collaborative knowledge building.

Knowledge building can take a variety of forms but all are essentially social and dialogic in nature. In Bakhtin's (1986) terms, it involves an "interanimation of voices" with the aim of creating a common, or shared, understanding to which all contribute, whether overtly or through responding internally to the contributions of others. Most frequently the dialogue takes place through speech which, in addition to the expression of participants' personal experiences, beliefs and values, often includes reference to artifacts present in the situation, such as material tools, diagrams, graphs and quotations from written texts of present or absent authors. However, the dialogue may also be conducted in whole or in part through writing, as will be illustrated below, and as is becoming increasingly common, it may be conducted via the internet.

While knowledge building involving whole class discussion should regularly occur when new curriculum content is first introduced, there are other opportunities for creating opportunities for it to occur. One of these is through what Tharp and Gallimore (1988) call 'instructional conversation.' This typically involves the teacher meeting with a small group of students while the rest of the class is involved in self-directed activities. As the

term implies, the teacher has an instructional purpose in mind, such as learning how to make sense of a written text – a work of literature or a textbook exposition of historical or scientific information – or how to plan and carry out an investigation; however, rather than telling, the teacher encourages the students to engage in a conversation about the topic, expressing their own ideas, responding to those of others, asking and answering questions. In these ICs, the teacher's principle role is one of facilitating the conversation and keeping it on track, providing structure where necessary, supporting the more reticent participants and helping all to reach an agreed-upon conclusion or to recognize that alternative conclusions are possible.

To this end, one of the most powerful incentives for collaborative knowledge building to develop is to engage students in inquiry (Brown & Campione, 1994). Almost any curriculum topic can be approached in this way. After a preliminary exploratory discussion, students are asked to select some aspect of the topic that they find particularly interesting and to pose relevant questions that they would like to try to answer. Groups are then formed by bringing together members who have overlapping interests and similar questions that they want to explore. Each group's goal is to create an Object that represents the best understanding of their chosen topic that they can manage to achieve. Such an object can take many forms, ranging from a functioning model to a work of art (e.g. a drawing, a story or poem, a musical performance) and from a scientific explanation to a geometric proof, a map or an explanatory diagram. The value of such an 'improvable object' is that it provides a clear focus for discussion, particularly if it is a representation of its creators' current understanding. Furthermore, at each stage, critical consideration of the object is likely to raise further questions and to motivate revision, thereby calling for further knowledge building (See Figure 2). Finally, when groups present their 'objects' to the rest of the class, or perhaps to other audiences beyond their own class, there are further opportunities for informed knowledge building.

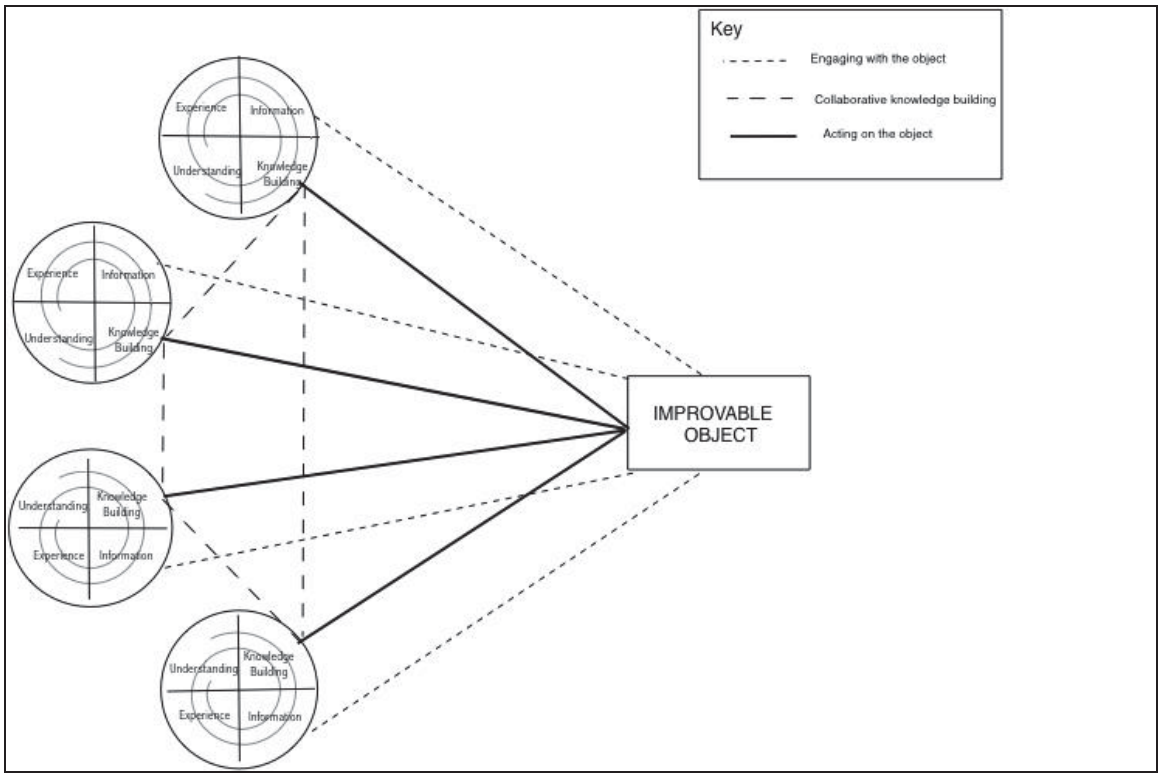

Figure 2. *The Role of an Improvable Object in Knowledge Building*

Rather than teaching students to accept and memorize 'what is known' simply on the basis of authority, then, the aim of knowledge building is to help them to recognize that all knowledge of the world in which we live is tentative and open to improvement. Furthermore, since advances in knowledge come from just the sorts of 'progressive discourse' (Bereiter, 1994) in which students are engaging, they should be encouraged to see that, by being apprenticed into this form of discourse, they can gradually take on the role of expert in their chosen field and contribute to the larger enterprise of creating knowledge that will have consequences for action and, hopefully, for improving the human condition. It is also important that they understand that, in some areas –- for example, in relation to ethical and aesthetic judgments or in constructing explanations of complex events with multiple causal influences -- there is no single 'right answer' since there are alternative points of view that are equally persuasive.

Finally, it is worth emphasizing that when learning takes place through active investigation and dialogue the whole person becomes involved. Learning through participation in collaborative knowledge building is not simply a matter of acquiring more knowledge. It also involves relating to co-investigators as well as recognizing changes in attitudes and dispositions toward the topics investigated and in the knowledgeable skills that such investigations require. In other words, learning, seen as increasingly full and effective co-participation in exploration of topics and issues of interest and concern to the learner, is also a major influence on the formation of his or her identity and self-image and, by the same token, of the ways in which he or she is

regarded by others. For this reason, it is important that engaging in classroom dialogue be a positive experience for every student. With this in view, students should be encouraged to ensure that all contributions to the dialogue are both formulated as clearly and coherently as possible, and accepted and treated with respect – even when this takes the form of productive disagreement (Mercer, 2000).

Promoting Dialogue in the Classroom

My own commitment to promoting dialogue in the classroom began in 1984, when the Bristol Study came to an end. In part, this commitment developed in response to the comparison of language at home and at school, the results of which were discussed above. But it also arose from my new responsibilities when I moved to OISE/University of Toronto, which involved working with teachers as they studied for a Masters degree in Education as well as carrying out research in local schools. On the basis of these experiences, I began a collaborative research project with a group of volunteer teachers which came to be called the 'Developing Inquiring Communities in Education Project' (DICEP).[4]

As will be seen from the title of the project, we placed a strong theoretical emphasis on inquiry. The motivating force for learning that is generated by inquiry is developed at some length in the writings of Dewey (1974) and, while not made explicit in Vygotsky's theoretical work, it has become a key feature of many of the pedagogical implementations of his ideas in recent years (Stetsenko & Arievitch, 2002). Our emphasis on 'inquiry' also arose from our shared recognition that, in the context of the classroom, dialogue is most likely to develop when students have experiences and ideas that they wish to share and that this is most likely to occur when they have been inquiring into a topic of interest to them. Finally, an orientation toward inquiry also has advantages from an organizational point of view since, when students share the responsibility for selecting the topics to be investigated and the methods they will use to do so, the resulting sense of 'ownership' of their activities enables them to sustain their engagement and to develop strategies of responsible collaboration that lead to successful completion.

However, the emphasis on inquiry was not only an orientation for learning and teaching in the classroom. It was also the organizing principle for our collaborative research as, over the ensuing ten years, both individually and collectively, we investigated how to create the conditions for dialogic inquiry to flourish in our own classrooms in schools and university. In what follows, I will describe two of these investigations in order to give a flavor of how teachers and students learned together

[4] This project was funded from 1991 to 1999 by the Spencer Foundation, whose support is gratefully recognized.

about the positive consequences of adopting a dialogic approach to the topics they were addressing.[5]

A Teacher's Changing Role in Class Discussion

In the first example, Zoe Donoahue (1998) had established the practice of reading aloud every day to her grade four class and of encouraging the students to discuss the story after each daily read-aloud. In the December of the fourth year of her participation in the project, she decided to read *Mrs Frisby and the Rats of Nimh*. She also decided to videotape the follow-up discussions. After the first two recordings, she spent some time viewing the videotapes she had made and was dismayed at what she discovered. Far from having encouraged free-flowing discussion, as she had intended, the videorecordings showed that a version of the Initiation-Response-Followup (IRF) structure still dominated the interaction. As teacher, she called sequentially on children who had their hands up, they expressed their thoughts about the story, and she provided some form of positive follow-up. She then moved on to the next volunteer. Given this discourse structure, children's remarks were always addressed to her as the hub of the wheel and so, not surprisingly, there was little or no interchange among the students themselves.

The next day, the teacher talked to the children about what she had seen and proposed a new discourse format. On completion of her read-aloud, she, as manager of the discussion, would nominate a child from among those who wanted to speak and, following his or her turn, any other child who wished to speak to the same topic could do so without waiting to be nominated. She also emphasized that, in a good discussion, people link what they say to previous contributions and make clear how their own contribution relates to what went before. Although unfamiliar as a way of conversing in the formal context of "a lesson", the children had little difficulty in adjusting to the new format and in the discussions that followed the reading of the remaining chapters, the frequency of "true" discussion (Nystrand et al, 2003) among students increased dramatically, averaging almost 30% of all sequences as opposed to less than 2% on the first two occasions.

In the following extract, however, unlike the discussions that had followed previous read-alouds, in which the children had largely been making and debating predictions about how the story would continue, this final discussion was intended to engage the class in reflecting together on the story as a whole. This they did initially by saying what they liked about it, mentioning particular events that intrigued them, and also by suggesting alternative ways in which a sequel might continue the saga of the rats' attempts to foil the humans' efforts to recapture them or, failing that, to exterminate them altogether.

[5] Further examples can be found in *Action, talk and Text*, a collection of chapters by DICEP teachers (Wells, 2001).

It was in this context that another teacher who was visiting the class posed a question, as prearranged with the class teacher, asking the children which of the two leader rats, Justin or Jenner, they would choose to follow if they were given the choice. Like them, the visitor knew that, at the conclusion of the novel, those rats that survived the gassing of the comfortable home they had constructed under a rosebush close to a farm had to choose between two alternatives. Justin considered they would be better off if they started a new settlement further away from humans; Jenner, on the other hand, was keen to continue the technically advanced way of life that had been made possible by tapping into the water and electricity services to be found near human habitations. By asking them to explain which leader they would follow, the question invited them to explore one of the main themes of the story by relating it to their own experiences and values.

The extract starts after one or two children have offered their points of view.
*(*In the following transcript, children are identified by the first two letters of their names; T stands for Teacher. * is used where a word is inaudible.*)*

Ka: *I'd go with Justin . um . 'cos .. uhm . like human beings- we don't like it when people do things to us and so . I think they have a right to . uh- do what they wanna do . . just like other people . like humans-*

St: *Not ALL HUMANS*

Ka: *and I think *** I think that they're doing the right thing by not dealing with it *****

Fr: *But how would ******

Ss: *No . no-o-o*

Je: *They could be either ** living here . and when they got there they could just **

Me: *live on the fruits that they had*

T: *Uh-huh*

Me: *They already had a fruit supply there*

T: *Yes they had a fruit supply there*

An: *Well if I could split myself in half and stay alive I would go both ways because . if I went to Jenner's side it would be easier and you'd have electricity and stuff . and if I went to Justin's side . uhm- it'd sort of be safer because you're with a whole bunch of other rats*

T: *(nominates David)*

Da: *I would go with Justin because . I know that my life is boring because I have running water and electricity that I can use whenever I want . so I want- I'd like uh- life to be a bit more of a challenge*

T: *That reminds me of one of the reasons why my family- . why we enjoy going up to our cottage- because we don't have any luxury at the cottage . we only have running COLD water .. and we don't have any toilet - we just have an outhouse . and . we're on top of a big hill . so you have to haul everything up and down the hill … and then we get back to the city and we really appreciate . being able to turn on the hot water and walk to our house from our car in two*

seconds- you know . so . it's kind of- I know what you're saying- it's nice . and I feel lucky to have that chance to live out a harder life sometimes . that makes me appreciate my easy life that I have every day

T: *(nominating) Frank and Adam and then we'll stop*

Fr: *If I were Jenner . I would've waited a bit .. I think Jenner should've stayed a bit longer . to find out all- uh more in more detail*

Ad: *Uhm- I think a better idea- I'd go with Justin- 'cos uhm- if you go with Jenner . you rea- you could easily get caught because they like- realize that you're trying to steal stuff . and uhm . and then also maybe doctor Schulz would come after you and finally catch you so it would be- a smarter idea to go with Justin ..*

T: *Everybody, that was again a great discussion . for over fifty- not fifteen but fifty-five- oh- minutes- listening to me read for about half an hour and then talking for about twenty five minutes or so- that's amazing! I don't think you could have done that in September*

Although those unfamiliar with the story may have had some difficulty in following the finer points of this animated discussion, it is clear that the arguments that the children put forward for their choices were intelligible to the other members of the class, since the latter extended them or offered alternative points of view. It is also clear that they understood the implications of the two alternatives. Particularly interesting in this respect are Andrew's explanation of the quandary that he finds himself in and David's willingness to take on the challenge that Justin's alternative presents.

The teacher's reply to Andrew and David, which is more a conversational response than a follow-up move, both takes up their contributions and relates the alternatives they have presented to her own family's arrangements, which enable them to have the advantages of both worlds. Then, in the second part of her contribution, she restates the contrasting values to which the two rat leaders are committed. Finally, Adam, the last student to have a chance to speak, takes a more pragmatic position in choosing the greater security that Justin's plan offers.

This extract shows how far this class has come as a result of the teacher adopting a more dialogic format for their discussions. Not only are they listening to, and responding to, each other, but they are also, together, deepening their understanding of the conflicting values that the story embodies.

The Knowledge Wall: From Spoken to Written Dialogue

Traditionally, writing has been thought of as monologic and conversation as dialogic. However, with the advent of email and electronic discussion groups, this perception is changing, as more and more people carry on sustained discussions in writing with people they never meet face-to-face. An important question, therefore, is how this potential of writing as a medium for collaborative knowledge building can be exploited in the classroom. This was the question explored in a grade eight classroom, in which Karen Hume taught most of the curriculum.

The impetus for this teacher's investigation came from her discovery of the Computer Supported Intentional Learning Environment (CSILE), developed by some of my colleagues (Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1994). Technically, CSILE consists of a number of networked computers that are linked to a central server, which enables a class of students to create a communal database to which each of them has access. So, instead of simply studying what other people have written about a topic, students are able to compile their own text, incorporating the results of their own empirical research as well as what they take from published sources. But, more important, they are encouraged to start by posing their own questions and putting forward their own tentative theories for discussion and comment by others. Since their network is linked to the internet, they are also able to contact people beyond the classroom who are interested in the topics they are investigating and to seek reactions to their questions and developing theories.

Karen had read an article describing CSILE and was intrigued by its possibilities for supporting the kind of inquiry-oriented work she promoted in her classroom. However, as her school did not have the necessary network of computers, she had to find an alternative and less costly 'technology'. Her solution was both cheap and very effective. She cleared a large noticeboard on one wall of her classroom to serve as the equivalent of the computer database and waited for an appropriate opportunity to launch her idea.

This soon came, in the course of a curriculum unit of light. Her grade eight students were experimenting with pairs of mirrors touching along one edge. They quickly discovered that if they looked into one of the mirrors and gradually decreased the angle between them, the number of reflected images progressively and rapidly increased. One student became quite excited and announced that if he brought the two mirrors completely together there would be an infinite number of reflections between them. Others immediately disagreed, counter-arguing that there would be no reflections at all.

Karen saw her opportunity and asked the first student to write his observation and proposed explanation on a Post-it note and pin it to the noticeboard. She then invited other students to add their comments and alternative explanations. Within minutes, the first notes were posted and, over the next two days, some 40 more were added to the board, some signed and some anonymous. Arguments for both positions - a very large number of reflections, or none at all –were initially almost equally forthcoming. However, those who believed there would be no reflections at all finally succeeded in persuading their opponents through the cogency of the arguments that they used to support their position.

This was the inauguration of the 'Knowledge Wall' and, thereafter, it played a central role in many curricular units in Karen's classroom. Typically, after some initial exploration of the topic, the class brainstormed the questions they thought most worth pursuing and these questions were posted on the knowledge wall. Students then selected the questions they were most interested in researching and added their findings, theories

and further questions to the knowledge wall as the principal means of pursuing their inquiries. From time to time, whole class discussions were held orally to make connections between the different issues being investigated and to reflect on their significance.

The following sequence of notes is taken from a year later when, for the first time, the knowledge wall was used in the study of history. It occurred in a unit on the Causes and Consequences of the Black Death in Medieval Europe in a class of grade six and seven 'gifted' students that Karen was then teaching. In the materials made available, some students had been intrigued by references to, and illustrations of, protective clothing worn by doctors. As the following posted notes show, the students used conjecture, evidence from published material and reasoning to attempt to construct a satisfying answer to their question.

Question: Why did an odd bird figure in a cloak protect doctors?
(*referring to an image from a history book showing a doctor clad in leather and wearing a beak mask that makes him look like a bird*)

Ian: *I don't have a total answer for this, but the paragraph underneath the picture says that the bird mask is to filter out the polluted air, and the wand is to heal patients. Don't ask me why he/she wears a leather cloak.*

Eren: *If what this guy is wearing is a mask, it might have actually helped him stay healthy.*

Alec: *This is good Ian, but why a bird/man/penguin?*

Justin: *At the end of the caption of the bird figure, in quotes, it claims, "doctors hoped to avoid the contagion by looking more like a crow than a man". Can anybody try to clarify the quote?*

Alec: *Why a crow?*

Suzanne: *People probably wanted to be birds because they saw that the birds weren't dying. This is because birds don't get fleas and fleas caused the Black Death.*

Matt: *It was not the bird figure protecting the doctors like a god, but it is a form of disease proof clothing. The beak is an early form of gas mask, the cloak of heavy leather. The wand is for soothing the patients. The doctor is covered from head to toe, therefore keeping out the disease.*

Ray: *Theoretically, the birdlike cloak thing might prevent the fleas from getting to the doctors skin, thus giving the individual the plague. The cloak was basically a shield.*

Suzanne: *This could and probably is true, but I doubt the people of the time knew that.*

Jon: *I think it is a witch doctor because of what he is wearing.*

Justin: *It is just a doctor dressed in leather wearing an early edition of a gas mask. More like a doctor wearing a shield from the fleas.*

Suzanne: *But Justin, the doctor didn't KNOW that fleas cause the disease, therefore he couldn't have been wearing it for protection. That's why I agree with Jon that yes, the doctor probably is a witch doctor.*

The bird suit only had a spiritual meaning.

Justin: *I didn't say that he/she knew. I mean that the doctor was using the leather as a shield.*

Ray: *The birdlike figure of a god worked. Scientifically speaking, it protected the wearer by preventing the fleas from reaching the skin. It had religious value too. The power of the costume prevented the virus from taking over. COMBINATION*
Some guy who lived in a town saw his friends dropping like flies. He then decided to cover himself up with lots of clothes. He put clothes on that made him look like a bird. Some doctors noticed he didn't get the plague and thought it was a spirit who protected you when you wore the clothes. But what they didn't know is that it stopped the fleas from getting to you. Question solved

Justin: *Did the odd bird figure protect doctors? What is your source? How did these people have the technology when they did not know the cause?*

Brad: *No Justin, the bird man didn't protect doctors. It was the fact that all of their skin was covered and no fleas or rats could pass the disease on to them.*

Colin: *Brad, I must agree, with their bird suits on, the fleas infecting the patient could not penetrate the skin, spreading the disease.*

Ray: *The reason that they thought the suit protected was spiritual. The reason it actually protected them was that it kept the fleas off them. Please reread my previous notes.*

Alec: *This is crazy. It keeps going from spiritual focus to just plain protection and shield edge. Let us first try and get which one is correct. Maybe they're both right. I don't know.*

Justin: *It's not crazy. It keeps on doing that because we are arguing over spiritual and protection. They are both right because the doctor thought it was spiritual, but it was a shield.*

Alec: *Well put, Justin. I now understand why it keeps going. Thanks.*

Amanda: *Maybe that was what doctors wore all the time anyway.*

Brad: *Amanda, I really truly doubt that doctors wore that all the time because I remember reading something that said those costumes were first used during the Black Death.*

There can be little doubt that the written mode in which this discussion was conducted contributed both to its responsivity - students picking up and responding to previous contributions - and to its progressive nature (i.e. working towards an acceptable explanation). Of particular interest, in this respect, is the exploration of the relationship between behavior, beliefs and scientific theory: “How did these people have the technology when they did not know the cause?,” asks Justin. If one adopts an entirely rational perspective on the motivation of human action, this is a real problem for the explanation that has been proposed. However, as Ray explains and reiterates (“Please

reread my previous notes."), an action can be correctly believed to be efficacious, even if the supposed explanation is erroneous. Indeed, as he might have added, many folk remedies involving natural herbs have been equally effective, despite what now seem quite bizarre proposed explanations of their healing powers.

This was not the first use made of the 'knowledge wall'; as already explained, Karen had previously put it to good use in the study of scientific topics (Hume, 2001). In this example, however, we can see that it is also an effective tool for inquiry in subjects which less easily lend themselves to empirical tests of alternative hypotheses. It seems, therefore, that what makes the knowledge wall so effective is that, although differently in different subject disciplines, it enables its users to exploit the composition of written texts as a means of making visible their growing understanding of the topic they are addressing. In this respect, the students' progressive contributions to the making of an answer to the initial question constitute a very clear example of the value of an 'improvable object' (as illustrated in figure 2 above) in facilitating collaborative knowledge building.

However, this is not to argue that writing supersedes oral discussion. In all classrooms in which this sort of written discussion occurs, participants also talk with each other about notes already posted and those they are thinking of writing. Nevertheless, something more is involved when the contribution is made in writing. Unlike speech, writing leaves a record of the activity involved - an object that can be returned to at leisure, and then reconsidered and improved through revision or response (Lotman, 1988).

Creating the Conditions for Dialogue

The arguments for the value of learning and teaching through dialogic knowledge building have been developed at length above as well as in a number of recent works (e.g. Alexander, 2006; Mercer, 1995; Nystrand, 1997) and can be aptly summarized in the aphoristic statement that, whether in school or out, "knowledge is constructed and reconstructed in the discourse between people doing things together" (Franklin, 1996). When this insight is fully appreciated in the classroom, there is the potential for three important features to work together synergistically.

First, when students are given the opportunity to participate in collaborative problem solving they recognize that their contributions are consequential for the decision that is jointly constructed over successive turns. Where this affects their control over future actions it is easy to see why they are keen to express their opinions. But, as in the two extracts above, this motivation can be extended to topics of a more impersonal and abstract nature. What seems to be important in either case is, first, that participants are invested in the outcome of the discourse and, second, that the outcome is not predetermined in advance.

The second feature is the collaborative nature of the enterprise. While competition can certainly be a motivator for cooperation (Hatano and Inagaki, 1991), it seems that there is an equal, if not greater, satisfaction to be gained through working with peers toward a jointly achieved outcome. Not only does this "interthinking", as Mercer calls it (Littleton & Mercer, 2013), harness the social orientation of students' interests, but it enables them to achieve together more than any of them individually could have achieved alone. Furthermore, as (Dewey, 1916) argued, such early participation in collaborative decision making is essential for the maintenance of a society that claims to be democratic.

However, in the long term, the greatest benefit of collaborative knowledge building is the reciprocal development of understanding by individuals as well as the group. As Vygotsky (1981) noted, "the individual develops into what he/she is through what he/she produces for others" and it is in the effort to formulate our ideas for others that we most effectively clarify them for ourselves. This can be seen happening in both the extracts above. But, as Bakhtin (1986) argued, the effort to fully comprehend the utterance of another also involves uptake and an active, if only incipient, movement toward giving a response. It is therefore both in the act of "saying" and also in that of responding to "what is said" by others that individuals actively participate in the building of a common understanding and simultaneously extend and refine their own (Wells, 1999).

Committed to trying to create communities of dialogic learning, the DICEP group spent several of our early meetings in tentatively trying to formulate the conditions that we believed to be necessary for true dialogue to develop in the classroom. The following, at least, seemed to be essential:

- The topic under discussion must already be, or progressively become, of interest to the participants
- Individual students must have opportunities to contribute opinions, suggestions, observations or experiences that they want to share and believe to be related to the topic
- Others must be willing to listen attentively and critically
- All participants should be able to discuss whether and in what ways different contributions are relevant
- The teacher must share control with students as well as the right to evaluate contributions.

However we soon realized that, for these conditions to be achieved, we needed to think more carefully about the way in which the curriculum is organized in terms of subjects, and learning objectives.

As discussed earlier, there has been an increasing trend at national and state levels to conceptualize learning and teaching in schools in terms of standards for each subject that are typically formulated in the form of statements of what all students are required to

know and be able to do at each age or grade level. Clearly, some of the aims of the move towards standardization are to be welcomed, such as the attempt to create equity of opportunity for all students as well as the concern to prepare students to participate effectively in the technology-dependent contemporary international economy. However, both the abstract and decontextualized form in which the standards are stated as well as their sheer number tends to lead to the compartmentalization of topics, both within and across subjects, and to the likelihood that many teachers will rely on textbooks and externally constructed teaching materials rather than agentively developing teaching plans and materials appropriate to their own specific context. And to achieve the latter, what this means is that the processes of learning and teaching must be rooted in the lives, interests and concerns of the students – and the communities from which they come – and they must be experienced as relevant for their present and envisaged future lives. It follows, therefore, that the curriculum needs to be co-constructed by teacher and students together.

One potentially helpful way to think about constructing the curriculum in collaboration with students is for the teacher to see her or his responsibility in terms of two overarching but complementary roles. The first is the role of Manager, which she or he must perform as an employee of the District or State Educational Authority. This role involves being conversant with and enacting the mandated curriculum. At the same time, it also involves being conversant with and responsive to the history, concerns and values of the students and the local community. However, there is also a third aspect of the teacher's managerial role, which is to act in the light of her or his beliefs and values as well as personal knowledge and skills. Taking all these components into account, the Teacher as Manager creates a tentative plan of action –that she or he believes will meet all the above responsibilities and, as one outcome, equip the students to perform well on the eventual externally imposed summative assessment.

Key to performing this managerial role successfully is the selection of a Theme for the prescribed curriculum unit. Theme differs from topic in that, while a topic tends to be a statement of what is to be learned, a theme is more likely to take the form of a question to which the answer is not predetermined. For example, in grade four in my state, one specified math topic is to know the meaning of Area and Perimeter and to be able to calculate them for given dimensions. In a particular grade four class in which I was researching together with the teacher, the corresponding theme the teacher chose was 'How would you like to arrange your own room at home? How would you decorate it?' Early in the discussion that followed this 'launch' of the theme, several children talked about having to share a room with siblings and how they resolved (or failed to resolve) the inevitable problems to which this occasionally gave rise. Then they discussed the furniture they would like to have in their ideal room and the sort of floor and wall covering they would choose.

This preliminary discussion ended with a number of relevant topics to be

investigated, such as how much room would a bed or desk occupy, how much carpet would be required, how much wallpaper or paint, and the children formed groups according to which feature seemed most important to them. But, as each group would be involved in taking measurements and calculating perimeter and area, the teacher first asked each child, as a practical preliminary, to measure the length and width of the classroom table at which he or she was sitting, to draw a scale plan of it, and then to measure and calculate its perimeter and area. Later, when each member of the group had arrived at the answer to this 'challenge' and, as a group, had compared and recalculated their individual results where necessary, they investigated the more difficult problem of how much their projected feature would cost by consulting the price charts that the teacher had obtained from the relevant suppliers.[6]

Meanwhile, as the children worked on their chosen projects, the teacher enacted the second overarching role – that of Teacher as Facilitator. First, he circulated around the groups, observing their actions and listening to their conversations. Using this form of 'formative assessment,' he provided appropriate assistance to individuals where necessary and, on some occasions, engaged in an 'instructional conversation' with the whole group about an issue with which they seemed to be having difficulty. Second, at the end of several sessions he also had whole class discussions about what the different groups were learning, what helpful strategies they had discovered, both with respect to their projects and to their ways of working together collaboratively. In this way, he invited them to engage in self-assessment and, in the light of their individual and shared reflections, to modify their further actions as they saw to be necessary. Finally, using all the information he thus obtained about what, for the students, was the 'experienced curriculum,' he made modifications to his original planned curriculum in order better to achieve his overall intentions for the students' learning.

While I hope this example has shown the value of a theme in opening up space for dialogue when working within a highly structured curriculum, it certainly should not be seen as a blueprint for how a teacher should proceed in fulfilling her or his responsibilities as manager and facilitator: when and how to intervene to ensure that all are making progress and that the needs of each individual student are being met; when to provide direct instruction and when to build on students' contributions; how to ensure an appropriate balance of individual, group, and whole class activity; and how to evaluate the learning that is taking place. Given the diversity of schools, teachers, and communities and the differences between subject areas and grade level expectations, there can be no one best way to teach; a teacher's decisions must necessarily be dependent on his or her interpretation of the total situation. Nevertheless, I believe that

[6] An equally successful curriculum unit on area and perimeter could have been organized around the cultivation of different areas in the school garden, or around the differential allocation of portions of the asphalted playground for the various games the children like to play.

the approach just outlined is a tool that can help any teacher to think about how best to facilitate the learning of the students for whom she or he is responsible.[7]

Extending the Dialogue

One of the most important discoveries the DICEP group made as we met each month and communicated in between meetings by email was how much we gained from our time together, presenting our individual inquiries, listening and responding to those of others and identifying potentially generalizable insights about the conditions that made it more likely that profitable dialogue would develop. Equally important was our decision to begin to share our discoveries through joint presentations to other teachers at conferences and through contributing to *Networks*, an online journal for teacher research that we started. As with working on other kinds of improvable object, the value to us of preparing these kinds of presentation was in the dialogue through which we attempted to clarify our thoughts and to make them explicit in coherent spoken or written text. And, in the process, we came to understand better how the same could be true for our students if they really cared about the topic they were investigating.

The practice of teachers forming support groups, within or across schools, to explore ways of enriching their curriculum or of adopting a more dialogic approach to learning and teaching in their classrooms is not new. Many encouraging reports by teacher researchers have been published in books (e.g Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993; Hubbard & Power, 2003; Norman, 1992) and online journals (e.g *Networks*). In such teacher research groups, members share ideas about how to create a dialogic community, how to support their position when putting forward a controversial point of view, and how to help students make connections between their participation in class discussions and their individual reading and writing, At the same time they gain confidence in their own ability to systematically try out new approaches, to modify them as necessary, and to share their experiences with their colleagues and, in due course, with wider audiences beyond their own school. In these ways, they not only help their own students to benefit from the opportunities that schooling offers, but they also act as advocates for the power of dialogue as a major means of learning at all levels of education.

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[7] Further suggestions for selecting and organizing curriculum-relevant themes for inquiry can be found in Parker (2007).

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Section II
Educational Practice

Working with Youth at Risk: An Appreciative Approach

Bjørn Hauger and Ingebjørg Mæland

Our school, the Arbeidsinstitutt in Buskerud (AIB), offers training opportunities for youth at the secondary school level. Over 170 students participate each year, drawing from the four municipalities in Buskerud County. The majority of these youths are encouraged to transfer to AIB by municipal support services. Many of the young people seem without direction or ambition. Some have made the "wrong" educational choices, some are tired of school or do not feel they fit in at school for various reasons; still others have problems with drugs or arrive with psychiatric diagnoses. These youth can also apply directly to the AIB through the normal school application process and make use of the gap year as a period of clarification without losing their right to secondary education. Secondary schools also use AIB as an alternative learning arena for students who are otherwise failing or are maladapted to the public school regimen. There is a continuous intake of students over the entire school year.

AIB has several workshops that focus on practical training related to parts of the national school curriculum. The use of school and work placements throughout the year is designed around the individual student's needs. Many students take part in several different workshops and in different work placements during the year. In the educational workshop the students can improve their skills in Norwegian, English, Mathematics and in other subjects. The purpose of the workshops is to clarify, motivate and prepare the youths for continued schooling and employment.

AIB is mainly financed by the County and with some support from the Municipalities. The national Department of Education supported AIB during 2010 -2012 for a project named "More knowledge about *how to do it*"? They wanted AIB to: 1) spread the strength based way of thinking and working to schools in Norway 2) to qualify youths to lead appreciative inquiry processes and 3) to continue the development work with appreciative inquiry in AIB. The main goal was to enrich the learning culture in schools for all learners, to make sure students learn as much as possible, to increase motivation for more learning, and to prevent drop-outs (Sjong and Tanggaard, 2013).

AIB was chosen as one of four organizations to receive financial support from the Norwegian Crown Prince Håkon Magnus and Princess Mette Marit

foundation for year 2011-2013. The intention was to support projects that integrated youth actively into our society. It was a big honor for AIB to be recognized in this way and we were most humbled and grateful. The economic support has given AIB new and significant possibilities for spreading strengths based forms of education.

This work has been so successful that the Crown Prince Couple has chosen to continue its cooperation agreement with AIB. The goal for this two-year period (2015-2016) is that youth and coworkers in AIB will tour around the country in order to research the best learning stories with youth attending other schools and at the same time introduce strength-based tools to teachers, managers and students.

An Assertive Approach to School Drop-out: The Value Base

Working to prevent student drop-out in secondary schools has been an important area of focus for all schools and is included in the government's policy for reducing poverty in Norway. Even though the consequences of dropping out of secondary school are not necessarily negative for all students, Markussen (2010) shows that:

- Young people who leave secondary school early have difficulty holding down jobs
- They are much more likely to become unemployed
- They are seldom given job opportunities other than those in industries sensitive to economic fluctuations, and with poor pay and poor work environments

In other words, dropping out of school contributes to social inequality. Social problems are also a contributing factor to school drop-out. We know that the most drop-outs occur among students who apply under special conditions (for example those with learning disabilities), students with minority backgrounds, and those who have substance abuse problems and/or psychiatric issues (Baklien, Bratt and Gotaas 2004).

What can the school and social services do to prevent at-risk students dropping permanently out of school and work life? When the school and relevant support systems confront students who are tired of school, who have poor attendance, or who abuse drugs or alcohol, it is natural to try to uncover the reasons for their problems, and to search for the right programs to help. This paper will describe an alternative and more assertive way of dealing with these problems. Recent research in positive psychology suggests that if one is to succeed in making profound changes in established behavioural patterns, one must abandon the frame or perspective at the base of negative thought patterns. This does not mean that one should overlook the problems with which the student struggles at school, or that which is failing in the schools themselves. However, in our view, one must work with the problems in a more assertive way.

The origins of our more assertive approach can be traced to a long period of developmental work at our school. The work began in 2005 with the development of a national educational policy for training. Based on the educational platform, AIB established five core values, and in Norwegian language each value starts with the letter T; we call it the 5T model and it is central to us. In English, the values are: *Well-being, Belonging, Trust, Credibility,* and *Availability*. We search for means of communicating these concepts constantly, in words and action. As we found, it is important that those involved decide together which values characterize their activities. The most important thing is to have the objectives and competency to transform the desired ideal into reality. Shared understanding, communication and common approaches all contribute to the persistent facilitation of this work.

Through this work, AIB created its educational platform. It is a platform that devotes principle attention to the individual student, and contributes to making the ordinary school day good for all students. For example, the sheer fact of helping the student to be present at the school is particularly effective at getting them to remain in school. School absences become a kind of coping strategy for the student, leading to subsequent drop-out. Confronted with overwhelming absence, dropping out becomes a 'reasonable' choice writes Buland and Havn (2007).

Through this development work, we have relied importantly on Appreciative Inquiry processes. The staff and leaders were able to experience how appreciative processes create new energy in the organization, contribute to building better relations among the staff, and result in people setting more ambitious goals (Hauger and Nesje, 2006). It was on the basis of these experiences that AIB chose to use the same approach in their daily encounters with students. It is from this approach that we derived the practical methods for student talks discussed below. A very important factor in the development work has been adopting an appreciative approach at all levels of the organization.

It has been incredibly exciting and motivating to have us all involved in our training and educational practices using an appreciative orientation. A core group of AI coordinators/change agents has led the work and developed means of distributing the leading process. Most AIB departments have attained a common language and employ common tools. During the last two years the students have become increasingly involved as equal learners an all levels of the organization, and during the years transformative change has been realized (Bushe, 2010).

All the staff in AIB still has - after nearly ten years of continuous development work with AI - the will and energy to try new ways of thinking and communicating. The engagement and enthusiasm, with its ups and downs, is now fully supported. We continue to dream and develop. Especially important are generative questions. Such questions must be as clear and challenging as possible. The learners find it very interesting and also quite fun to work with questions like: “What do we take for granted?” and, “If something happens that we can’t even think of now, it is bigger or more spectacular than you could dream of,- what could it be? What would you like to tell about then?” As one of our teachers commented:

> *I think that the mood among the colleagues and youth is completely different now. The entire atmosphere is much more positive. This schooling has worked for everyone. I think we expect slightly more from them. It is a completely different way to work, the way we talk to them, the way we ask them about things as well. I think they are made more aware.*

With this value base in hand, we now share specific practices stimulated by these values. Our major focus is on Appreciative Student Talks. However, nestled within these talks are the more specific tools of the Road Map and the Tree Method. Let us describe each in turn.

Appreciative Student Talks

Buskerud County adopted an action plan in autumn 2007 to prevent drop-out and improve continuation in secondary school learning. The AIB was awarded funding to prepare a method book about the potential in student talks and career planning based on a strength-based approach. This is to replace the long established problem based approach to change. AIB chose to go with an action research approach in this work, and the book was ready in 2008 (Mæland and Hauger, 2008). Rather than an end of the work, this marked the beginning of a continuing developmental work. The fruits of our work are represented in appreciative student talks. We see this as an important tool for recruiting and keeping the youths in formal education, and making it possible for them to realize their goals. Close follow-up and continuous contact with parents/guardians and support agencies is included as a natural and important part of the work. It is important to make sure that everybody collaborates in order to support the students in achieving their goals.

Very significant in the development of appreciative student talks was a 1990 article by David Cooperrider and Suresh Srivastva,"Positive image, positive action: The affirmative basis for change". In it they present the idea that human systems move themselves towards images of the future. With a basis in medical research as well as research in psychology, anthropology and sports psychology, they argue that future plans have a lot of influence on the potential for change. The ideas we have of our future

influence the actions we take now. This is to suggest that we ought to be very aware of the mental images we have of our future. In Appreciative Inquiry this idea includes “dreaming” of a positive future, and then designing specific steps to realize this future. In Winston Churchill’s words: "We shape our buildings; thereafter they shape us". When an architect designs a house, he/she must include the load-bearing elements which will make the house stand. In career planning, we allow students to shape and create the building blocks and load-bearing elements which are necessary to realize a dream.

At the beginning of a programme or in the very first talk with a student. We introduce what might be called “dream talk.” Sometimes it takes several talks for the student to manage to clarify his or her future dream in relation to career and work. We express clearly from the first talk that the first aim for the student is to decide on a career path or profession. After the career plan has been started, we follow with a clarification stage in which specific goals are generated and target dates established. During this stage the dream picture will become clearer.

The talks are connected to the roadmap method, to be described below. The dream is described normally as a long-term goal in a career plan and the smaller sub-goals ("steps") can be added in accordingly. During periods when a student is lacking motivation, a "dream visit" can help to re-focus. There are, of course, youths who do not stick to one dream over this time, but we presume this to be natural and shift with the student accordingly. We write up the new dream, and see it all as a continuing clarification process for the student.

This method can be used in a class with all pupils together or in individual talks. Our experiences have showed us it is particularly suited to those youths who don't know what they want to do with their lives. To be able to see the connection between training and the meaning it has for achieving their own goals, gives increased motivation for learning. Even though some don't have the foggiest idea what they want to do, most have at least an idea of where they think they want to live, and what they want to do in their free time. In order to live alone and have good friends, they will be dependent on having an income. It is therefore important to talk with these youths about how they imagine themselves doing this - and create a mental image of a good and exciting future. The point of all this clarification is that their education becomes clearer and their motivation grows. Teachers and students obtain a common picture of what the student will work towards, which builds trust and good relations.

Using appreciative interviews involves the youth and sets a positive focus. The instructor must create an atmosphere of complete trust and confidence. By showing an interest in the student as a person, asking about the future, friends, hobbies and not just about school, builds confidence and gives the instructor insight into more of the student's capabilities. Many students are able to say a lot about how they want things to be in 3-4

years. It is important to write it down exactly the way the student tells it, and show that you appreciate the student. Look into what they mean with the words they use to get the clearest possible picture of what they want.

Students who reply with "dunno", "I wasn't the one who decided I should be here" or "that's got nothing to do with you/it's none of your business", are challenging, and a more creative approach is required. A good start can be to ask "do you think you'll be living at home in three years?" The follow-up "where do you think you'll live then?" can be redeeming. The answer that they'll be living in a flat or apartment usually follows quickly and the conversation is underway. "What would it be like there? What does your living room look like for example? Do you have a car?" To investigate and create these images together with the youths can stimulate some exciting conversations. It is both interesting and important to write down what is said. These images fill out parts of the dream and are written at the top of the roadmaps. If the career description is vague, write down key words that are mentioned, such as "something to do with cars".

Student talks do not necessarily have to take place in an office or classroom. Sometimes it is easier to talk in a car, in a garden field or while we are going for a walk. What is expressed can be written down afterwards. It is also important to take the youth's dream very seriously. To give the student a reality check by saying "maybe that's not really right for you" quickly kills any initiative. Trust that the process itself, with student talks and career planning over time will help the youth themselves understand and adjust their plan. This requires however that the instructor is completely present the whole time, listening and asking guiding questions which encourage the student's reflection.

Our work has shown how appreciative student talks can be used to help students create a career plan to reach their own goals, or achieve something important in their lives. It also shows how that this approach can be used in preventative work. The approach helps youths who are in risk zones to gain maturity, and can give a constructive direction to their lives. Let us give an example:

An instructor at the AIB talks about one of the course participants exploring a career plan:

> *The girl is very clear about what she doesn't want to do, but has little idea about what she would actually consider doing. The talk takes time. The focus is on what the girl doesn't want or can't see herself doing."*

According to the staff at the Arbeidsinstitutt this is a typical situation. They meet students who have little self-confidence and who do not contribute much in their conversations with the adults. It is often the teacher who has to "drag it out" of the student. This is usually so in the beginning of the conversation. The way that the student involves herself is to talk about what she doesn't want to do. The student underestimates her own competency and her own resources. Neither does the student have any idea about what she wishes or wants to do. The teacher tells how the conversation moves slowly. But in the course of it the teacher shifts the focus:

I ask where she sees herself in five years. The question comes unexpectedly for the student and she needs to think about it. But after a while she begins to tell how she wants an apartment or a house which is out in the country. She sees herself driving a car because of the remote location. "It could well be a Volvo" , she says. "I would also like to have at least one dog".

In the course of the conversation "we set a good tone and a good understanding of each other", explains the teacher. What is it that triggers this change? It is the new questions that the teacher poses to the student during the talk, questions that explore the students' strengths, her hopes and dreams. At the AIB we have learned to shift a conversation from having a negative focus to having a positive focus. With the student's dream as the starting point, the teacher and student together can work towards finding concrete approaches to take. The teacher explains:

For example we could start with the process of obtaining a driver's license - or totally concrete things which she herself had to figure out to get herself in work and to start looking for jobs.

For many of the teachers and instructors it has been a discovery that even the quiet, insecure and immature students can have many dreams about their future. Those at the Arbeidsinstitutt tell how these appreciative student talks make students "*become more open and motivated during every talk".* Furthermore, they explain how using positively directed communication can contribute to the youths achieving their goals more easily.

One of the teachers sums up his experiences with the use of this method in his work with a boy who lacks motivation and is absent a great deal because of his social background.

He dares to show more of himself, he has begun to take the first small steps towards his dream. His attendance has dramatically improved; he has begun at an educational workshop. He sat in on classes for one day at high school. It has made the clarification part simpler and quicker."

The example above points towards the core of appreciative student talks: Conversations that have an exclusively positive focus. The goal is to find out what the student is capable of and is good at, what they dream of achieving - and how they can use the resources available to them to get there. Appreciative student talks can be used both during guidance talks with "ordinary" school students, and in work which follows up those students who for various reasons struggle at school. As another teacher tells us:

What I see, is that it becomes much more real and you can help create the path they take to get there. And that we set up small goals all the time. I wasn't really good at doing that before, but now I see what they dream about achieving. And often I think it's really realistic. They want normal things, it's nothing unrealistic. And we can start helping them earlier than we could before, because now we have a likely target.

The Roadmap in Appreciative Student Talks

One of the main goals for appreciative student talks is that the youths create a plan for how to realize their dreams and goals. The dream should function as a compass that gives life direction. Students therefore need to acquire skills in seeing the relationship between the dream and the actual actions that will carry them towards their dream.

With the instructor or guide contributing to the youths realizing their goals, new and exciting opportunities and challenges open up in their work. The teacher and student find out about the student's interests, successes, strengths and dreams through conversations. Behind all of these conversations lie career goals to be drawn up. It can be anything from furniture builder, doctor, or car mechanic to chef. For many students there is a long way to go before they get there. The big goal is broken down into small steps. Then important milestones can be marked out for celebration once reached.

In AIB we have learned that it is a very effective planning tool for all the learners to have a visual roadmap on the wall. The same experiences with use of roadmaps and appreciative talks are shared by those working with organization development (Hauger et al 2008). The advantage with the roadmap is that it doesn't end up in a drawer or on a shelf under piles of paper.

From positive psychology research we know that people with clear goals and aims in their life are happier than those without. Big goals with visionary characteristics draw out extra resources from people working to realize their plan. If one is to succeed, one must transfer big aims into smaller steps. The concept of *stepping* is used to describe a way of working to achieve a large goal by breaking it down into much smaller goals (or sub-goals). In our experience, this is a skill that needs to be learned. By using the roadmap method, we practice these skills. The smaller steps are clarified, with students increasingly able to see the steps individually, often in the form of mental images. When these sub-goals are accomplished and celebrated, new energy and motivation is created. This is why celebration is an important part in the roadmap process.

In AIB the roadmaps are displayed on the walls of the classroom or workshop. Both the students and the instructors are constantly reminded of the direction and goal they are heading towards. In student talks, appreciative interviews are used to find which strengths and competency the students have, and which can be used in working towards their goals. Concrete actions that students can take, and supportive measures from the teacher, parents and others involved, are all noted down in the plan. Target dates and evaluation are written in.

If students are to achieve their goal and sub-goals, they must also learn how to tackle obstacles and solve problems that they encounter along the way. It is worthwhile to look at situations where the youths have displayed some level of problem solving/coping. We look into these situations and try to find exactly what the youths did effectively. In this way the youths have to define obstacles and identify and activate strengths to get through or around these obstacles. To help the students visualize themselves as they

overcame an obstacle, one can ask questions such as "how did you rely on others around you?" or "in what way was it that your Mum was able to help you?". As one of our 16 year old students, Daniel, reports:

> *I feel like I've learnt so much from the roadmap. Every time I come up with a goal, I put it on there. What motivates me to get my goals is that when we do, we have a little party. That's my motivation. It's also pretty good to have something to work towards. The roadmap has been like, the best way to learn that. I feel like the roadmap has helped me so, so much.*

The Roadmap method visualizes students' goals, what to do, when and with whom, and features celebrations of successes along the way. Sensitive information is of course not put into the Roadmap. Youths recognize that they own the roadmap and the goals that are on it. It can be a living document where dreams and goals can be adjusted according to what comes up. The visual roadmap makes it easier to hold continuity and direct attention to the goals, and the way dreams are transformed into concrete actions. During student talks, what the student has done and what he/she plans to do about reaching his/her goals is reflected on. This way, the student is trained in looking at where his/her strengths lie and how he/she can consciously use these to learn more, and so to influence their own future. These are processes that lead to development.

Turning to the details, making the roadmap on blank, ordinary paper with a marker has had a good effect. We put the date of the conversation at the bottom of the paper and draw a timeline all the way up the paper, ideally about 1.5 metres. The dream is written at the top. This can also be written in question form; "what would it take for me to..?". Many students want to write it down themselves, but it can also be effective to show that the teacher has been listening and that he/she writes instead.

In a student talk about a career plan, the instructor often speaks about the dream which lies in the future. When the student succeeds in reaching a sub-goal, the reasons for success are mapped out. These reasons can include receiving help from others, or their own actions or ways of thinking. These documented reasons for success can be brought up at later opportunities when things get tough and sub-goals seem unattainable. When discouraged, the student should be asked to talk about their dream to try to increase motivation again. It is important not to have too many sub-goals at the same time. In the conversations about which goals to choose, the students can be encouraged to think strategically - "what do you think is most important for you to do first?"

The roadmap method can also achieve good effect in areas such as reading skills, and indeed, in any subject or life area where students wish to improve themselves.

The Tree Method

The tree exercise is useful for figuring out sub-goals (steps) and actions. After having identified sub-goals, these are written at the lowest end of the timeline on the Roadmap. The Tree exercise is based on three D’s in AI’s 4 D-model. If there is a

problem, it should be rewritten as a wish (Dream), and the focus is shifted to what the students would like. The desired situation is written into the trunk of the tree. This should be worded in a short, concise manner. Then students are asked to tell a story about their best experiences within this focus area (Discover). When the students have told their stories, the teachers ask them to about possible reasons for these successes (Design). The questions should be as open as possible and it is important to ask further, in-depth questions, such as: What was it that led to...? Can you tell a little more about that? What do you think made it like that for you?

At this stage it is important not to contribute with one's own understanding or answers, or to try to moralize. We need to be patient and wait for answers. Sometimes the participants need time to think. The answers given by the students are filled in at the roots of the tree and are called the *energy-giving factors*. A positive incident becomes a root. Multiple examples from the students furnish a range of energy-giving factors; these often build on each other. This accumulated impact can increased by continually asking: What do you mean by? What was it that made that…? Through this process the students can realize that they are competent and have the ability to create to achieve the goals they set for themselves. Then the teacher asks a new question: How would it be if we could have these energy-giving factors present every day - all the time? The answers are written in the crown of the tree (Dream), and through this the students can envision how their future could look. It is very important here to get the students to express what they see, what they hear,
feel etc.

An Integrated Illustration

Here we try to illustrate the combined use of the tree method and road map in appreciative interviewing. One of our instructors describes the process:

> *I initially asked if it was ok for the students and the other participants if the talk could be done in a slightly different way, because I was learning and trying out something new - a new method that the students could also use if they wanted. They answered yes, and I went and got a big sheet of paper, rolled it out on the table, and wrote the date on it with a big marker. I drew a line and said that the top of the sheet is four years into the future. Then I asked the student: "How is your life going to be in four years?" The answers came quickly:*
> *"I am working, working in sales, have a family, kids, house, car and dog."*
> *"How is your take on everything?"*
> *"Good, have good friends."*
> *"What does that mean?"*
> *"Have stopped playing around."*

"That sounds good. So, you want to work to look after yourself, get a job so you can get a house and car. Have control over your behavior so that you can have good friends and a nice family life?
"Yeah, that would be cool, I'm managing alright now though you know..."
Then I shifted the direction of the conversation:
"We here at AIB want to help you manage to get all these things you're planning on. That's why I want to be honest with you and say that right now, some others are saying that you're not behaving how you should to get where you want to go. They don't know how things are going to work out for you. We know that sometimes you don't have full control and end up in serious trouble. We have to figure this out. What will it take for you to have control over your aggression, and what will you do when you get angry?"
"I guess I have to stay calm..."
"It's not as if you get so angry every time either, you usually don't actually, so we can talk about what you do when you don't get really angry?"
"I haven't been playing around lately though, have I?"
I turned to the guardians who answered: "No, it's been going ok. He is good at home, positive and hangs out with nice friends."
"That sounds good. What do you think is most important to do here at AIB these first three weeks, so that people here will really believe that this is going to work out?
"I've got to work on trust?"
"Yes, I think that's important. Have you worked at building up trust before?"
"Yep"
"Can you tell me about when you've done that?"
"Yeah, I was at a place where I had to be followed around everywhere. I had to work on trust, to be allowed to be on my own."
"What did you do to build trust then? Is it ok if I draw a tree and write down what you say? It might seem silly, but I've learned that it can be easier to see what we're talking about then."
Then the youth told the story about how he was allowed to be on his own, and summed it up thus:
"I sucked up to the people working there"
"How did you do that?" "I was happy"
"What else did you do?"
"I did what I was told"
"Like what?"
"Like tidying, washing up"
"Did you do anything else?"
"Started doing the things I knew I was supposed to do"

"What happened then?"
"They were happy"
I wrote this at the top of the tree, and asked, "Did you do anything else? Is there anything else you can think of?" There ended up being many roots, and eventually I said: "Did you do all this?" and showed that I was impressed. "Yeah!" said the youth and also seemed impressed and surprised. I responded, "Yeah, but I don't call this sucking up, I call this building trust and what you told me now convinces me that you CAN do it. You can, you only need to do it more. How do you think things will be if you do more of this, how do you think people will react?" "They'll be happy with me."
"Yes, do you think anything else will happen?"
"Everyone is just like, more easy-going"
I continue asking and the youth gives me many answers that I write in the crown of the tree. This creates a picture of how the youth could have things, and the potential he has to achieve what he wants. I go on:
"Could you consider making trust the aim for these first three weeks?"
"Yeah, would do you mean?"
"Well, it's important that others here see that you are doing things differently now. Are there things here in the roots of the tree that you can do to show this?"
"Yeah, I can start smiling at people"
"Anything else?"
"Say hey"
"Anything else you would do?"
"Body language, I can be more like, awake. And maybe tidy up after myself in the cafeteria"
"Is it ok if we put this up in your Roadmap?
"Yeah, whatever"
"I would really like to talk to you each week to see how it's going, and to take your plan further. I'd also like to hear how it's going in the different subjects too. Is that ok?"
"Yeah, that's ok"
"Then we'll set up the next meeting on the plan here, ok?"

Concluding Discussion

In this article we have raised the question of what a school can do to prevent “at risk” students falling permanently out of school attendance and working life. Until now the preventative work with this student group has been based on a defensive paradigm. At the root of this paradigm lies an assumption that one can distribute youth along a scale on which the well-functioning or clever are at one end and the poorly functioning at the

other. Those who fall down to the negative end of the scale are viewed as a problem, or as having a problem that "someone" should do something about.

At the Arbeidsinstitutt in Buskerud (AIB), we have chosen to apply a more constructive and uplifting way of understanding and meeting these youth. We have been concerned to develop a school in which all the students can reach their potential. In order to find out how we can create such a school we have applied Appreciative Inquiry (AI) as an action research strategy. Such a strategy begins by involving all employees in examining the situations in which the school functions at its best: learning situations in which an unexpected quantity of learning interest and feelings of coping and mastery are created in students who have had a great deficit of such experiences. Through this research we have found that examining and learning about these good examples also changes the view of what these students have the capacity to achieve. We also found that changing the conversations (the discourse) in the organization about the students contributed at the same time to changing everyday conversations with the students.

Through the first AI process from 2005-2007 a new pedagogical platform for the school was developed. This developmental work had an organizational focus. From 2007 – 2008 a new AI process was begun at the Working Institute. The focus was then on relational cooperation with the students – and how the strength-based way of thinking could be used in everyday conversations. This developmental work resulted in the relational and strength-based conversation concept Acknowledging student conversations (Mæland and Hauger, 2008). AIB has worked with AI and strength-based tools on all levels in the organization for over 10 years. The parallel processes have strengthened one another reciprocally. We find that this has contributed to the further development of the organization while all coworkers and eventually all the students have trained strength-based relational skills continually.

The foundational structure in an acknowledging student conversation follows the cycle of an AI process. When one, for example, uses the tool 'strength tree' it is the first 3 phases in an AI process that are followed: definition (focus on the best experiences), discovery (examination of that which creates success and gives life) and conversations about the dreams of the youth. In a road map conversation, one begins with the dream before one works with different mental routes and small steps toward (realization of) the goal.

We find that these tools have an empowering function in conversations with the students. Conversations about own successes, strengths, dreams and hopes give the students greater self-belief and the ability to develop more ambitious dreams for their own lives. We also find that the concepts for the student conversations that we have developed are simple for the students to understand. We see that many of the students who have had (relational) training in the application of these ways of working experience find it so meaningful for their own lives that they wish that "all youth" could experience the same thing. Many of the youth have themselves entered into the role of trainer for

other youth who wish to be acquainted with the method. In the course of one to two years at the Working Institute, we have seen many students take the leap from seeing themselves as "academically weak" to viewing themselves as "leaders".

Today the concept of acknowledging student conversations has become part of the institutionalized practice of the Arbeidsinstitutt. The tools have become an important support structure for the establishment of a new relational – and strength-based – practice in the everyday interaction with the students. We have found that conversations with the youth about when they are at their most lively –about their strengths and dreams– open up for more constructive possibilities for action both here and now, and in the future. We believe that the practical usefulness of the tools is significant within ordinary schools and in relational conversations with students who have lost belief in themselves and their future opportunities.

Another important experience from The Working Institute is that the systematic use of these tools has contributed to increasing the capacity of the entire organization for cooperation with the students and all the students' abilities to cooperate with their teachers and the school as an organization. In recent years, AIB has begun to use the acknowledging interview from the first school day and placed emphasis on identifying one another's strengths several times throughout the year. The experiences are that trust and security are built more speedily now; yes, from the very first day we find that smiles and laughter come more clearly forward and hugs are given freely. The youth are involved in the direct running responsibility for AIB as soon as they start. This occurs through participation in the weekly meetings with coworkers and through introduction courses in strength-based thought processes and method tools in the course of the first weeks. The experiences thus far are that the youth are very interested in contributing to realizing AIB's vision of the future.

In our modern society there is an array of barriers that hinder natural cooperation between people. These barriers are maintained as ordinary by the language we use. The concepts of teacher and student are examples of this. A teacher is to be understood as one who possesses more valuable knowledge. The student is in the complementary role of one who receives knowledge. Traditional student conversations in the school are based on these complementary roles. Acknowledging conversations is a new concept that invites students and teachers to transform these old roles – and establish new ones. In order to support this we need also to develop new words and concepts for these new roles and for what characterizes the new relations. At the Working Institute we have adopted the concept of *learning colleague* in order to describe the new teacher-student roles. We wish to effect that both parties – student and teacher – could be seen as two equivalent learning partners. One of the aims of an acknowledging student conversation is to co-create the best version of one another and the relation of which one is a part.

We also find that use of these tools does not merely change the lives of youth and the relations between them and adults. We see that systematic use of these tools in the

whole organization has contributed to transforming the whole Working Institute and contributed to increasing the capacity for cooperation with the students in an array of new areas. Let us look at one example: Spring 2014 there is a personnel meeting at the Working Institute. Also youth are present. This is the first day following Easter break, and the youth would normally have the day off from school (the employees have a planning day). One of the youth present is participating actively in the work by summarizing the experiences from the developmental work as viewed from a youth perspective: "Here the kings and peasants are on the same level", he says. By this he means that there is no great difference between people. "Students and teachers are together in a more equal way," he explains. He is one who holds external and internal lectures with teachers and leaders for the Working Institute. He has given presentations for NHO, and at national conferences and regional gatherings for different groups of professionals. He does not present only his own story but also communicates theory and helps to train youth and adults in strength-based change methods.

Through acknowledging student conversations employees discover again and again what fantastic resources these youth have –and what they miss out on if they do not cooperate with the youth in as many areas as possible. This is why youth sit in the management of the Working Institute for work on organizational development, why they are invited to be part of meetings, are part of hiring meetings, participate actively as cooperation partners in meetings with parents and are active in external courses and conferences.

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Losing the "Lie":
Teaching "Intro" from a Social Constructionist Position

Mary Gergen

The chapter discusses ways of approaching the teaching of introductory courses from a social constructionist position, with a special focus on psychology. Basic texts in psychology advocate a natural science model of inquiry as its foundation. Thus, psychology should be produced and taught in the same way as other natural sciences. The implausibility of this position is evident when one notes the numerous and conflicting perspectives that inhabit the field. One sign of this conflictual landscape is the incoherence of one chapter to the next in a traditional introductory psychology textbook. Yet, for most instructors the challenge is to maintain the illusion of scientific unity while teaching diverse sub-specialties, which include behaviorism, psychoanalysis, and cognitive development, among many others. The pretense of declaring scientific truths, no matter how incoherent one approach to psychology is from another, is what I call "the Lie". The tendency in teaching a basic course is to train students to learn the material in each chapter, no matter how contradictory it is to the preceding one. This autobiographical chapter deals with the issue of becoming honest, as opposed to hypocritical, in presenting the diverse paradigms of psychology by using a social constructionist metatheory. Psychology is not demonized, but redefined as a discipline with multiple discourses. Other foundational courses share similar burdens, which a social constructionist metatheory can relieve. The chapter also emphasizes the positive potentials of regarding diverse discourses or paradigms as a source of strength, not error. Ways of facilitating the course from a social constructionist position, including action assignments, are also described.

Psychology: A Pot Pourri of Paradigms

Most college professors at one time or another are assigned to teach a course labeled "Foundations of" – which purports to offer the elementary rules and rationales of the discipline. Generally the underlying assumption is that these basic facts are the proper underpinnings of the field, and should be learned as a catechism of this particular cathedral of learning. In Introductory Psychology, the orienting assumption of the basic text is that the study of human thinking and behavior is a scientific discipline, similar to the natural sciences in terms of the proper ways to conduct one's research and to understand one's field.

The definition of psychology is centered on the notion that it is an empirical science modeled on the natural sciences. Often students are presented with an image of psychology as a body of knowledge that is unified, progressive and lawful. Yet, if one closely examines recent introductory textbooks, one finds that the seeming unity is but a thin façade covering over a diverse and potentially conflicting multiplicity.

To begin, there is not one, but at least two competing definitions of psychology. One definition emphasizes that psychology is the study of the mind, or perhaps, since the rise of neuropsychology, the brain. The other definition states that psychology is the study of behavior, what people do, not what may be in their heads. This distinction is never addressed, despite the opposing orientations it might suggest. On a practical level, given the range of possible perspectives one can take within the field, it may not matter. To confront the dichotomy in a classroom would muddy the seemingly clear waters of scientific unity.

As for the range of perspectives, Introductory Psychology is composed of a variety of quite distinct and often incompatible fields. Textbook chapters are stitched together like a quilt, with each new chapter displaying a distinctively different pattern from the others. Even more discretely, most chapters are themselves broken into smaller patterns, so that each patch is itself a patchwork. Each square of the quilt has its own design, with its own definitions, methods of inquiry, significant findings, and relevant conclusions. One might consider the diversity among the biological, behavioral, cognitive, cultural, social, personality and psychotherapeutic chapters. Each of these chapters is developed on the basis of various theoretical positions, and in many instances they are in direct conflict, both within and beside the other chapters. Although the problem is writ large in introductory psychology, it is also evident in other psychology courses.

In most introductory psychology textbooks the first chapter is an introduction that explains that psychology is a proper science, akin to a natural science. In *Psychology: A Concise Introduction* by Richard A. Griggs, there is a recognition that there are diversities of perspectives, but they are not in conflict, according to him. “There are four major research perspectives – biological, cognitive, behavioral, and sociocultural. It’s important to understand that these perspectives are complementary. The research findings from the major perspectives fit together like the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle to give us a more complete picture. No particular perspective is better than the others, and psychologists using the various perspectives work together to provide a more complete explanation of our behavior and mental processing.” (2010, p. 1). From my perspective, nothing could be further from the truth, so to speak, than the notion that the diverse findings, related to disparate theoretical positions, would fit together to complete the jigsaw puzzle of psychology. This might be true, if there were only one puzzle, metaphorically, but it would be more apt to suggest that there are dozens of puzzles.

In general, introductory texts in psychology follow the same sequence of chapters, that appear to be arranged as analytical building blocks, moving from the basic to the more elaborate, building the person from the single neuron, out. As Table 1 indicates, the early chapters are biologically based, and the later ones tend to have more social and cultural aspects.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. What is Psychology (history)
2. Scientific Methods in Psychology (gathering data, replicability, criteria, observational research, experimental research, ethics, statistics).
3. Biological Psychology (neurons, brain, drugs)
4. Sensation and Perception
5. Nature, Nurture, and Human Development (Piaget, Erikson, social learning)
6. Learning (Pavlov, Skinner, social learning)
7. Memory
8. Cognition and Language
9. Intelligence
10. Consciousness (sleep, hypnosis)
11. Motivated Behaviors (hunger, sex, work)
12. Emotions, Stress, and Health (emotions, emotional intelligence, fear, anger, happiness)
13. Social Psychology (cooperation, competition, social perception, attraction, social influence, attitudes)
14. Personality (Freud, Jung, Adler, learning, humanistic) personality traits (Big 5), personality assessment
15. Abnormality and Therapy (Classifying disorders; Psychotherapy- psychoanalysis, behavior therapy, cognitive, humanistic, family systems therapy.)

Table 1. Table of Contents for a Typical Introductory Psychology Textbook

A brief survey of the Table of Contents of well-known introductory psychology books, such as *Psychological Science*, 5th edition, by Michael Gazzaniga, Todd Heatherton, and Diane Halpern (2015), *Introduction to Psychology*, 9th edition, by James W. Kalat (2010); *Psychology: Concepts and Connections*, 9th edition, by Spencer A. Rathus (2005); *Introduction to Psychology*, 9th edition, by Rod Plotnik and Haig Kouyoumdjian (2010), and *Psychology: Themes and Variations* (2012) by Wayne Weiten illustrates almost identical topics in identical orders.

In the typical textbook, chapter two covers “the scientific method”, including forms of descriptive statistics and experimental methods, with the crowning glory of psychology said to be the ability to discover general laws of cause and effect. Underlying

this preference is the belief that through these methods, the science of psychology will progress, as all the facts will fit together to form a higher unity. Usually there is less mention of qualitative methods, and what functions they might serve in the field. This form of research, often descriptive in nature, does not follow the protocols set down for experimental research. While qualitative research may be mixed with quantitative methods to give richness to the statistical outcomes, or to make them more interesting, alone they represent a weak form of analysis. Qualitative research alone is accepted as a precursor to hypothesis testing research, a way of exploring the territory in order to find variables that might be good candidates for more controlled forms of research (Worrell, 2000). In prestigious journals in the field, qualitative research accounts for very little of the content. In a related field of criminology, “qualitative research is not only the ‘weak’ stepchild of the scientific community in the eyes of many criminology and criminal justice scholars, but is also numerically the rare method behind published scholarship in the field. As reviews of published research articles in criminology and criminal justice show, less than 11% of articles in top tier journals in the discipline employ qualitative methods …and less than 15% of articles in non-top-tier criminal justice journals utilize and report results from qualitative studies (Buckler, 2008; Tewksbury, DeMichele and Miller, 2005) according to Richard Tewksbury (2009, p. 40). One may well suspect that similar percentages of quantitative to qualitative research are represented in the top journals of psychology, as represented by various indicators, such as the Citation Index.

From a social constructionist position, every “truth” discovered by empirical methods, including experiments, is a form of truth that is congenial with the type of method and the theoretical orientation that was used in producing it. Truths are found within perspectives, not beyond. For a social constructionist, the insights of qualitative methods might well be more fascinating and useful for working in the everyday world than results extruded from an experiment. In most cases, experiments require such strict controls over the phenomenon of interest that the practical applications relevant to them are harder to implement than the outcomes of qualitative research.

After the methods chapter, the usual one is on the basic building block of the field (supposedly), which begins with the neuron. One might note the similarity here to how a natural science course might begin with a discussion of smallest unit of analysis, for example, the atom. The chapter is biologically based, and builds from the single neuron to the various parts and functions of the brain. The next chapter is Sensation and Perception. The brain, in connection with the outside world, sees, hears, feels, smells, touches, and is guided in action. Again this is a biologically based chapter.

Interestingly, the chapter on “learning” is based on two separate, and basically competing forms of behaviorism, the first is devoted to Pavlov and his salivating dogs, that is “classical conditioning.” The second is a review of the work of B. F. Skinner, which is totally aligned with the notion that reinforcements elicit behavior. Skinner’s approach assumes that all behaviors, whether gambling or making love, are learned via

various contingencies of reinforcements. Customarily a portion of the chapter at the end describes social learning theory, a mixed method approach that tries to combine a reinforcement approach with a cognitive one, which again is another theoretical position. The social learning approach, which emphasizes modeling, social roles, social influences, and mental images, is often used to explain aggressive and prosocial behaviors. Bandura's social learning theory attempts to unite the various strands of learning theory, with the added compliment of mental components.

Chapters on development, emotion, personality, mental illness, and therapy are a jumble of approaches, including developments in Freudian theory, as well as other psychodynamic theories, plus, cognitive-behavioral theory, (which is the offspring of two discrete perspectives), plus Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow, humanistic theorists, who focused on the self, love, the stages of human development based on needs, and self-actualization. The discrepancies between the view that we are dominated by Unconscious sexual impulses, as Freud would advocate, and the view that we are self-aware and emotionally intelligent beings, who grow with loving kindness is huge. A variety of other personality theories, dominated by the notion of "The Big Five" set of traits, also compete for preeminence. Social psychology chapters, once clearly orienting to inter-group relations, now are splintered into topics as diverse as neurosocial, motivation, and cognitive functioning.

The last chapters of the typical textbook usually deal with defining mental illnesses and treatment according to the DSM (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual), the Bible of the psychiatric community and the basis for insurance reimbursement for therapists (DSM 2013). The primary model of this nosology is found in various specialties of medicine, with psychiatrists following the pattern set by the dominant medical community; psychologists, after losing the battle over diagnosis and treatment options, now more or less conform, in order to gain the advantages that accrue to following these constructions of mental illness. After years of resisting the psychiatric constructions, with the attendant diagnostic framework and use of psychotropic drugs as the treatment for these illnesses, the psychological community created their own specialization, adopting the DSM and its use of medications. The controversies within psychology over the acceptance of the DSM as the basic system for evaluating mental or emotional difficulties is of longstanding, and is a highly complicated history. From a social constructionist position, it is one very prominent mode of making distinctions, with important social, economic, and political ramifications. The positive and negative consequences of utilizing this system are beyond the scope of this chapter.

The Big Lie and the Social Constructionist Reframe

I have found both ethical and practical challenges in dealing with the "lie" at the base of this introductory course, and the orthodox representations of the field of

psychology that are behind it. The lie is that the traditional course presents a field that is unified, progressive, and based on the “scientific method”, which is taken, seemingly intact, from the natural sciences; the usual claim is that in following this method, psychology will become a science on the order of biology or chemistry, if given the resources and time. As a course instructor, I can choose to ignore the lack of unity, thus supporting the pseudo-coherence in the texts themselves, or I can try to explain the origins of competing perspectives, and pursue another path that is much more congenial to my views, and which, in the long run, supports the value of psychology as a worthwhile field of study. The path I choose as an educator is one that is shaped by a social constructionist metatheory.

Defining Social Constructionism

Very briefly, at the core of social constructionism is the view that all descriptions and explanations of “the real” are created through communal practices (Gergen, 2015; Gergen & Gergen, 2004). As various communities come to share their language, values, and practices, so do they come to create what they take to be the nature of the real. Scientific groups, in a similar way, develop their descriptions of the real. Black holes and mirror neurons owe their existences to the scientists who create and affirm them. Thus, the theories, descriptions and explanations furnished by scientists are not mirrors of nature, but are essentially ways of shaping a vision of reality that reflects the interests and concerns of their particular communities. As Thomas Kuhn (1962) famously described it, the paradigms that “normal science” use are totalizing entities, which contain theories, concepts, equations, instruments, journals, websites, organizations, hierarchies, prizes, awards, grants, laboratories, machines, statistics, educational curricula, heroes and villains, and ways of practicing the paradigm. Only when there are anomalies, that is, incidents or objects that will not fit the current paradigm, is there a concerted effort to break out of the mold. This occurs rarely, and only after a period of conflict, strife, and obliteration. Kuhn did not regard the social sciences as having paradigmatic status, but considered them as having pre-paradigmatic forms, where struggles were evident. The example of four approaches listed in the psychology textbook by Griggs, cited above, indicates some of the various contenders for dominance in the field.

Searching for TRUTH

An important feature of social constructionism is that the search for the Truth, that is truth that is universal and beyond questioning, is abandoned. Each perspective we take in order to define the “real” has its own truths and its own means for ascertaining them. Thus, it is possible for psychoanalysts to have their truths about repression, defense mechanisms, and the unconscious, for example, while a behaviorist could frame their truths in terms of contingencies of reinforcement. But beyond some particular perspective, there is no transcendent form of Truth. Each of the perspectives reveals

reality to be of one sort or another. Each emphasizes one form of reality, and is silent about all others. Each has advantages and disadvantages. Although it is easy to fault each perspective for its claims to hegemonic status within the field, it is important to recognize that each one provides a window on the world that may be vital to certain groups of people and to certain ways of living. Evaluating these benefits and losses depends upon the values that each perspective encompasses.

The Value Question

A related challenge of a social constructionist approach to psychology involves the notion that science is supposed to be value-free or value neutral. Traditionally, it was argued that science should focus on what *is* the case as opposed to what *ought* to be the case. Yet, as is commonly recognized in many ideologically invested traditions, including those dedicated to various social justice goals, there are implicit and explicit values embedded in even the most seemingly neutral research. Even the scientific mantra that the scientist is objective in pursuit of knowledge is a value-statement. Some values are more obvious to an onlooker and others are more subtle. Using the pronoun “he”, for both women and men was the usual form of grammar until the feminist attacks on sexist language made a difference (Gergen, 2001). Feminist psychologists have also been highly sensitive to the way in which research has unfairly been biased in favor of boys and men (Barnett & Rivers, 2004). Even more troubling to feminists has been the extent to which research from evolutionary psychology has rationalized male promiscuity and even rape (Buss, 2003). Again, it is deceptive to teach the traditional formulations of psychology regarding value-neutrality without questioning its basic assumptions.

When taking the metatheory of social constructionism seriously, one elects a position that is non-foundational (Gergen, 2015). That is, the notion that something is unquestionable and solid enough to support an entire theoretical enterprise, in this case the science of psychology, is repealed. When one gives up the idea that there is just one Truth, or that some proposition is foundational, then other considerations come to the fore. Certain questions may be asked that provide a basis for going forward in a certain manner. Thus, one may ask: For whom and for what purposes is this way of constructing reality helpful or harmful? Does it explain phenomenon in new and creative ways? Does it take in more features than previous ones? Does it help us do things we could not have done before? What values are implicit in it? What values are suppressed? Who is heard, and who is silenced? Does it have an aesthetic appeal to it? Is it beautiful or ugly? Traditional natural science philosophers have asked similar questions when judging among theoretical claims, such as whether the candidate can be considered parsimonious, inclusive, aesthetically pleasing or efficient.

Each of these questions raises a variety of answers, but no answer is itself a final conclusion. Whether some perspective is useful or not requires some prior sense of what utility means. The question of values is also open to various answers. Values are not

secured to any particular activity. There is ambiguity at every turn. Yet, it is of value to consider these dilemmas, rather than to assume the nature of any research position is self-evident. The social constructionist orientation is not designed, in principle, to abandon any particular discourse, but rather it is designed to open up a new range of reflection and creativity. It also invites people to create new theories, interpretations, and methods that may meet challenges in ways that are congenial with one’s values. This is the general approach with which I greet the students, and which illuminates my everyday teaching practices.

Teaching practices

How does such a view contribute to my teaching of psychology? If one regards one’s duties as presenting the facts to students in introductory psychology classes, for example, then lecture methods are ideal. The emphasis is on the transfer of knowledge, and Power Point presentations are convenient ways to do this. The use of slides to augment a classroom presentation is not, in itself, a problem; however, it may become a way of silencing discussion and questioning if it is designed as a pre-packaged summary of the “truth” about a topic. This need not be the case, but can be an enrichment of a topic, as it allows for distant elements and ideas to be brought into the classroom. However, if the classroom presentation is given value because the privileged source of knowledge is formal or systematic research, which is revealed by the professor, students’ descriptions of their experiences in daily affairs serve largely as distractions from the scripted text. Conversations among students regarding the material may be viewed as simply slowing the process down. Evaluations are best done by objective tests, which are designed to eliminate subjective evaluations and biases on the part of the students or teachers.

Despite the seeming contradiction, teachers, such as myself, place a high value on students’ personal experiences and classroom discussions. This orientation stems from the view that knowledge is not a commodity served by the professor to the students, but rather is co-constructed through active participation with the material and with other people. To engage in the co-construction of knowledge, a more participatory form of teaching is needed. In addition, the richness of the learning experience is enhanced by embodied activities and the inclusion of emotionally charged material. It seems likely that the more facets of the student involved in the learning process, the greater the production of insights and the motivation to continue to learn. I find myself attracted to dialogue and experiential practices, and design my courses to accommodate them. I do not have to pretend there is just one answer, one truth, to be delivered. No more lies.

More generally, students can be invited to learn about a broad range of theoretical orientations much as they would learn about various schools of art, styles of music, or traditions of writing. They learn to see that all theoretical positions have both potentials and limitations. Concerns with Absolute Truth are replaced with those of utility, ethics

and aesthetics. As a teacher, I am able to present this variety of orientations without experiencing a loss of personal authenticity, that is without having to mask my own constructionist views and pretending that I am offering students basic truths of human nature (Lather, 1991).

From a constructionist standpoint, I am sensitized to the way in which scientific facts are generated within various research communities. In effect, they result from a dialogic process. In this light, we may say that continuing dialogue may indeed extend understanding of various empirical findings. It is in this respect that in virtually all my classes, students spend a great deal of time interacting in small groups or altogether. They enter into dialogues as to what they find most exciting, interesting or puzzling in the readings, what they would like to question or challenge, how the readings relate to their personal lives or to what they have studied in other classes, and what they would like to talk about with their classmates. Through this format, I am also seeking connections: To the readings, to classmates, to other sources of knowledge, and to the outside world. A premium is placed on volunteering information and personal opinions. Students have the opportunity to challenge the materials, question one another, tell a story, offer alternative ideas for consideration, and form conclusions of their own. Often I maintain a low-key posture in order to give them space, to help them trust their own voices, and to speak about what is most significant to them (Hyams, 2004). The freedom and involvement that the students produce when they trust that they can be heard in the classroom is exhilarating for me and often for them; at the same time my role becomes one primarily of facilitator and listener (Gergen, 2010).

In terms of evaluation, the range of possibilities becomes enlarged beyond the multiple-choice, single answer, so-called “objective” variety of tests. Beyond papers related to library research, students can create projects that integrate various intellectual resources with social issues in which they may take an active interest. Various performative activities can be evaluated for their integration of ideas and actions. A colleague of mine used a lengthy on-line dialogue stream among small groups of students, after they had decided upon the criteria for evaluation, in order to grade a seminar on interpretation theory. Evaluation can include the voices of others, beyond the instructor’s. A social constructionist position can expand the range of possibilities for evaluation, which cannot be avoided in most academic settings, and is often desired by students, themselves. Often evaluations take the form of feedback, and there are options for revisions and new beginnings before a final assessment is made. All involved in a course are aware that evaluations are themselves socially constructed forms of activity, and are never final and “true” in themselves.

Teaching courses with a social constructionist stance gives me a sense of confidence that I can facilitate growth among my students and that this growth may differ in quality from one student to another. No student comes to me identical to any other. Why should they engage with the materials of the course as though they were the same?

Each one develops within a spectrum of potentials, according to the past as well as the present. I like to provide students with opportunities to think critically and creatively about their social values, their personal lives and their future development. In this sense, I am hoping that they will be able to take these potentials with them far beyond our classroom. Instructors from any discipline may benefit from a social constructionist orientation for much the same reason.

By holding classes that emphasize a dialogic social constructionist approach, one risks “dancing through minefields”, as Jean Marecek (2003) has suggested, as one deviates from traditional expectations. In adapting this metaphor, I am suggesting that the terrain for those teaching courses from a social constructionist position can, indeed, be dangerous -- philosophically, scientifically, ethically and practically. Being expected to participating actively in a course that requires much more than simply reading the text and passing exams can be threatening or annoying to students who wish to keep a low profile and evade any commitment to a class. Sharing one’s views, engaging with other students, and being evaluated in new and perhaps challenging ways may also be discomforting. Suggesting that, as a professor, I am not going to just give them the facts may seem like an abrogation of my duties. The unfamiliarity of the process, the requirements that they engage physically in the world, and be challenged to give up the solidarity of true knowledge may be, for some, repugnant. The social constructionist perspective is potentially offensive to someone who is a “true-believer.” It is not uncommon for dissatisfied students to report their feelings to higher authorities or to other students, and to drop the course, if possible. Despite these dangers, I have found that this approach is more personally satisfying than any other, and I do believe most students prefer the interactive classroom based on social constructionist ideas.

A Bit of Nitty Gritty

So far, my teaching style and the relationship of a social constructionist metatheory to my classroom life has been written in a rather abstract and theoretical manner. In this final portion of my paper I would like to include some of the activities that have been important in my ways of introducing a social constructionist approach in my classes.

By way of introduction, I might briefly describe the students with whom I work. The students I teach are young, about 19 years old, on average, and they have come to a local branch of a large university from their high school settings. Almost all of the students live at home, and drive their cars to school. Most of them have part time jobs; many have family obligations; and, few have had highly rigorous academic backgrounds. A few are older adults, who often have great fears about returning to college after many years. Some are veterans, with much life experience, but without formal education. Almost all of these students are marginal in some respects. They do not have family traditions of higher education; they do not understand how to do college work; they do

not always enjoy the challenges of the readings or the pressure to meet a certain grade point. There are several things I do in order to encourage them to stay in college. With each of the assignments I try to help them become more skilled at academic work, more connected to other students, and more able to integrate social constructionist ideas into their life-worlds.

On the first day of class in introductory psychology I introduce social constructionism and its potential to support multiple discourses by developing a multiple choice quiz that asked the students to select the answer that most appealed to them in a variety of different situations. Each potential choice is designed to emphasize a single perspective: biological, humanistic, behavioral, psychoanalytic, cognitive, or social. For example: Tommy, age 8, has constantly been in trouble with teachers and family members. He doesn't pay attention and is very active. He may not pass 3rd grade. His problem is: a. He was born with genes that make him unable to behave; b. His parents are not loving enough; c. He gets rewarded with attention for his bad behavior; d. He has unconscious forces motivating him; e. His thinking is disturbed; and f. His friends provoke him to do these things. By having them add up their scores (how many a's, b's, etc.), and comparing their scores with others, the students become aware of their own preferences and those of the rest of the class. I spend some time labeling these various approaches and giving them some sense of how each one differs from the others. By being somewhat ego invested in their choices, they become more willing to explore them further, or so I believe. My next task is to inform the class that they are not going to be learning a unified science, one where the building blocks of one chapter provide the foundation for the next. Rather they are going to be learning six different psychologies. Each one is fairly complete on its own, and each has advantages and disadvantages. I describe each one as a language, complete with forms of study. Each one has its ways of doing psychology, including methods, concepts, and values. Each also lacks the terms another might use. Is there a best one? What does it mean to be "best"? That is a question that we will grapple with as we go along.

During the semester, I introduce these various perspectives in a variety of ways, including movies, lectures, in-class activities, discussion groups, presentations by the students, and visiting guests. The emphasis is on learning the new perspective, on one side, and being able to critique it, on the other. Often the ways in which the perspective resonates with the events in the public sphere are brought into the classroom.

To help them become more skilled at communicating, I require Action Assignments, short papers involving the topics we are studying each week. The papers are designed to give the students a sense of how psychological ideas relate to the "real world", as well as showing the limits of any point of view. For example, one action assignment is called "Discourses of Addiction" for which students interview 3 people who very frequently consumed some substance, e.g. beer, marijuana, LSD, cocaine, hard liquor, etc. In their report, they describe each interview, naming each individual's

imbibing activity, and any efforts they have made to modify their behavior. (Anonymity is required.) Then the student has to classify the language used by the respondent as to how they describe their "addiction." Is it, for example, physiological, hereditary, a choice, a reinforced activity, an unconscious desire, poor thinking, social pressure, or a combination of these? Next, the student classified the answers given into one or more of the relevant perspectives in psychology, and then related the type of explanation to the possibilities for modifying their behavior. (For example, a choice is easier to modify than a genetic predisposition.) Also, the students are asked to suggest what implications these worldviews would have for creating health policies designed to reduce addictions to drugs and alcohol. Last, the student gives a personal reaction to doing the project.

Clearly the task of categorizing the language used by the interviewee and then the perspective in psychology that the language evolved from is a constructionist task. They recognize in doing this assignment that it is very consequential as to how an "addiction" is defined. The treatment and the outcome likely to follow are related to the discourse that is selected.

By doing all of these action assignments, the student gains a great deal of practical knowledge relating psychology to everyday life. They also have a chance to integrate their own "street" knowledge with academic viewpoints. As a side benefit, they also generally avoid failing the course, regardless of low scores on other evaluations, as long as they completed the action assignments according to the instructions given. By having discussions and small group activities the students also acquire new acquaintances, that can help to create a bond between them and the college. As a result the college environment becomes less formidable. My hope is that having the notion of social constructionism available to them, regardless of where their futures may take them, will gird them against becoming under the thrall of any ideology. Each viewpoint will be seen as having its uses as well as its limitations. One might argue that I am trying to socially construct with them a superior educational experience in a welcoming context, while keeping my integrity intact. From my perspective, giving social constructionist ideas to my students is a gift that knows no end.

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Relational Learning in Education

Anne Morrison and Kristen Chorba

This chapter is an informal account of the evolution of a peer mentoring project and an undergraduate course called *Relational Learning in Education*. It feels odd to write about any part of these projects as if they were *my* ideas. I can hardly separate out what I bring to them from what the students bring - let alone try to tease out where, who, or how I came to these ideas. I do know they are not mine alone, and that I feel good about sharing them with students. In this excerpt, Kristen and I share our thoughts, as well as what the students have to say about the impact the experience of these projects and these ideas have had on them. Therefore, this narrative has been written in multiple voices, and includes the thoughts of some of the contributors to the evolution of two relational learning projects that have emerged from these ideas.

While teaching at a Midwestern university ten years ago, a handful of students in the teacher education program came to me and asked if I would help them find a way to get more experience in the classroom prior to their student teaching assignment. At different times, some of the undergraduate education students in classes I taught would inquire about volunteer opportunities to work in schools with Kindergarten through high school (K-12 grade) level students. On occasion, other undergraduate education students have asked to join me in presenting content to students in the undergraduate Educational Psychology course I have taught for the past twenty years and they had successfully completed in prior semesters. Still others expressed an interest in mentoring students who were enrolled in that same Educational Psychology class. I did not know it at the time, but these instances marked the beginning of a new way of being in the classroom together and thinking about the possibilities that existed to create meaningful experiences for students outside of the traditional classroom.

This chapter is an informal account of answering these students' requests and the emergence of the Peer Mentoring Project, the eventual college course called *Relational Learning in Education*, and the evolution of these initiatives. While my colleague and co-author, Kristen Chorba, and I worked together to write much of this chapter, this narrative is predominantly shared in my (Anne's) voice, as the leader of this mentoring project and the instructor of the related Educational Psychology and Relational Learning in Education courses we write about. This narrative is richly enhanced by Kristen's point of view, as she studied the Peer Mentoring Project in-depth, as the subject of her doctoral dissertation. Throughout this text, the sections that are written from Kristen's perspective are *italicized*. In this account, we have also been deliberate to include the voices of some

of the students who participated in the Peer Mentoring Project and the Relational Learning in Education course over the years. It seems natural – if not essential – to include student voices in this account, as the project and course emerged out of their wishes.

Learning through relationships and the Reflecting Processes Approach

Relational learning is a way of being in the world of education from a social constructionist perspective, where those involved in education--students, teachers, mentors, community members and professors--learn from each other through shared experiences and, together, create a desired learning/teaching world. Relational learning is action that invites both students and teachers/professors to enter into a dialogue about learning. The engagement of multiple parties with multiple perspectives in the activity of learning deconstructs the hierarchy that typically exists in the traditional teaching relationship and opens space for more collaborative experiences.

The beginnings of the mentoring project and the Relational Learning course grew out of connections and collaboration. I continued to stay connected to the students who made requests for enhancing their learning through some kind of engagement with me and/or the courses I was teaching. Out of those requests, the Peer Mentoring Project emerged, as a way to support not only the students who had expressed interest in those types of opportunities, but also the students in my current classes who might be interested in participating in such an experience. Eventually, those of us who became connected through the Peer Mentoring Project socially constructed the Relational Learning in Education course. Both the mentoring project and the Relational Learning course continue to evolve, as new participants come to the experience.

As a way to organize our time and learn together, the students, Kristen, and I used the reflecting processes approach, introduced by Norwegian psychiatrist Tom Andersen and his therapeutic team in the early 1990s. Andersen and his team initially used this approach in therapeutic conversations, and described it as “shifts between talking with others about various issues and sitting back and listening to others talking about the same issues” (Andersen, 1996, p. 120). The act of actually talking to others, Andersen says, is outer talk, while listening can be considered inner talk. Each of these provides a complementary perspective, to help inform and understand the other.

The students and I engage in the reflecting processes as a way to listen, in order to hear our ideas about learning, teaching, and research. For example, when discussing an assignment we intended to present to the mentees, the mentors and I would form two groups in the room. The first group of three or four mentors would sit together and talk about the assignment. The remaining members would sit quietly, close enough so the first group could be heard. The first group would discuss the issue, talking about their experience of that topic. Once the first group was finished talking, the second group

would reflect on things that the first group had said, making observations about their conversation and making note of things that they had been wondering about, while listing to them. Once they had finished talking, the first group would discuss the things that had struck them, which had been brought up by the second group. This reflecting processes approach to conversation has not only provided a way for us to hear each other's thoughts and ideas, but has played a major role in how the mentoring project and the Relational Learning course have evolved over the past several years.

The importance and influence of multiple perspectives was discussed by Andersen (1995) as they relate to the reflecting processes, noting that, "they might create new ideas about the issue in focus" (Andersen, 1995, p. 18). The idea of multiple perspectives comes into action through the reflecting processes approach to relational learning. It can be experienced in both therapeutic and educational settings, as the back and forth process of listening to and speaking with others opens up different possibilities in understanding situations and information, allowing participants to create meaning with each other.

Becoming Relational Learning

This relational approach to learning was not something that these students were familiar with; in fact, it was quite the opposite. In the United States, most students come to the classroom or university setting with the traditional model of teaching/learning in mind, as this is the way they were taught to behave within a classroom for most of their lives. While one could agree there is a place and time for a teacher-centered model, the relational approach lends itself to the learner-centered, active process of co-constructing knowledge not only within the four walls of the classroom but beyond, out in the world.

This style of teaching – and learning – was not always natural for me, either. Instead, much like the mentoring project itself, it evolved over a period of time, influenced by a variety of experiences, situations, and relationships. My own undergraduate experience of education as a psychology/sociology double major was predominantly top-down, teacher-centered, and lecture-based. However, I had one professor who took me on as a mentee and supported my learning with laboratory and community-based internships. At that time, I was deeply interested in the field of juvenile corrections and my knowledge was rooted in Behavioral Theory (mostly because that was my mentor's focus). I spent several semesters and every summer working with youth who were tied to the juvenile court. Upon graduation, I was hired by a county court to serve as a juvenile corrections officer with the additional assignment to seek funding for and to, eventually, direct a group home for adjudicated delinquent boys in my hometown. I was twenty-one. What was the court thinking? For me, this was my dream job; one I thought I would not have until I was at least in my forties, if ever at all. I have to admit that once the home was up and running, I lacked confidence in my image as an authority figure

(which I believed I needed to portray to the boys and their parents) and so I bolstered myself up with a strictly outlined behavioral program I adapted from another university, with measurable objectives, goals, and consequences including a point system, rewards, and punishment. I used the program to establish a perceived sense of control and to steady the shaky ground on which I found myself, in the role of a group home director and, later, the live-in teaching parent (along with my new husband, three days after we were married) to ten adjudicated boys. This rigid way of working did not feel natural but, in the name of behavioral psychology, I persisted. Remarkably, all of the boys improved academically and eventually made use of the point system to earn their ways home.

The group home was situated on nearly 80 beautiful rolling acres in the country. I taught some of the boys to read and all of them to garden. Their parents taught me how to can our fresh produce. The boys taught me to fish and how to replace the brakes on my car. All of this occurred while I was in my early twenties. Four years later, my husband and I left that position and moved to our own home to start our family. I never returned to corrections but over the years, some of the boys I had worked with showed up in my life as young men. We shared memories and they often introduced me to a wife and/or one of their children. My relationship with those boys, so early in my career, continues to shape who I am as a professional, a parent, a daughter, a teacher, and a friend.

Today, as a professor, I share this story of my beginnings with the students so they come to know my personal, educational, and professional evolution and how my lived experiences have led to a very different approach to teaching and learning at this time in my life. I tell them that, during my graduate studies in counseling and human development, I followed a pathway that was very different from the theoretical framework of behavioral psychology of my early profession. While I was in graduate school in the late 1980s and early 1990s, social constructionist approaches to viewing and acting in therapy were new on the horizon (i.e., McNamee & Gergen, 1992). I became influenced by these ways of being in the world and especially when working with clients: they included narrative therapy (White & Epston, 1990; Freedman, & Combs, 1996), reflecting processes (Andersen, 1991), and solution-focused approaches (de Shazer, 1988; Walter & Peller, 1992; Miller & Berg, 1992). These more egalitarian ways of being with clients were especially impactful as I reflected on the hierarchical programs I had imposed on the youth so many years prior. My doctoral dissertation was focused on the use of reflecting processes in therapeutic relationships. I spent several months in the north of Norway and Sweden, researching the evolution of the reflecting processes.

During my years as a doctoral student, I taught a learning theories course for undergraduate students in the teacher education program. I expanded my use of egalitarian approaches to therapy, such as reflecting processes, into my work with the teaching candidates. My relationships with the students were guided by this heterarchical, conversation-based perspective every bit as much as the therapeutic relationships I was engaged in throughout the doctoral program. I created assignments that would encourage

these teacher candidates to "try on" different learning perspectives and used the reflecting processes to construct knowledge through conversation and collaboration. The open dialog that emerged from this approach to learning and teaching created space for students to form understandings of and insights on the topics we studied. According to Andersen (1996), both talking and thinking form and inform understanding and meaning, as well as creating a moment of "being-in-the-world" (p. 122). This focus on meaning-making and active exploration through dialogue that is the foundation of the reflecting processes approach in therapeutic conversations also worked well in the classroom. The students and I were in the swim of relational learning but, at that point, we didn't have a name for what we were doing.

Ideas for a college course by the name *Relational Learning in Education* emerged later, during my experience as a professor in the same teacher education program. By this time, I had earned a Ph.D. and had taught several semesters of *Educational Psychology*, a course that is required for certification of Ohio's teachers. The students in this teacher education class are typically 19-21 year old undergraduates with the occasional non-traditional student, often a mom in her late 30s or early 40s who decided to return to college to finish her degree in education.

My approach to teaching the Educational Psychology class is deliberately open-ended. While the syllabus gives students the usual contractual university structure, the assignments are open to a great deal of choice and invite students to be creative. Giving students latitude to make their own decisions and choose their own paths in completing course assignments follows a basic principle of the reflecting processes by allowing the meaning created by students to emerge. In describing the reflecting processes, Andersen (1995) explained that the process should be dynamic and adaptable to the situation, allowing those involved to be able to "do what feels natural and comfortable" (p. 19). Similarly, with these assignments, students are provided basic guidelines and rubrics to evaluate their finished products (as this is a formal, for-credit, university course), but their process, individual interests, approach, and personal goals for the assignment allow for a wide variety of outcomes.

Some students find the disequilibrium unsettling and have to work hard to adjust to the approach. Here, Michael, now a Kent State University (KSU) graduate, describes his experience with this less-rigid approach, as an early childhood education major:

> *My first semester in the program was an eye opening experience. The Educational Psychology [course] syllabus under Dr. Morrison was "open for interpretation." This was the first class I had ever experienced that did not have a specific set of instructions of how to achieve an A [grade]. Instead, Dr. Morrison allowed the students to think freely about what they were going to learn, and choose their best path to achieving what they considered to be a satisfactory grade.*

This openness lends itself to a not knowing position for all of us involved in the class. We must rely on each other, teacher and students alike, to co-construct knowledge and make sense out of the curriculum at hand. The assignments are structured in a way

that encourages the students to collaborate to build knowledge that is sustainable. As the instructor, I thought the assignments were useful, but wanted to continue to find ways to increase student engagement.

Forming the Peer Mentoring Project

The Relational Learning in Education course emerged from a series of circumstances that occurred over several years. In fact, the Relational Learning course did not start out as a course, at all. Instead, it began as an informal peer-mentoring project the students and I created. The peer-mentoring project began to take shape during the summer of 2007, when I led a group of undergraduate teacher candidates to study abroad in Italy. Kent State University has a beautiful campus in a palazzo in the heart of Florence. During this hybrid (i.e., part face-to-face, part online) course, we used Florence as a base; visited several primary and secondary schools and a high school in Florence, as well as an International Baccalaureate English speaking school in Rome; participated in a workshop at the Reggio Emilia Loris Malaguzzi International Center; and toured Tuscany. Over summers when I have taught this course, the two- to three-week, face-to-face, study abroad portion of the class is over, most of the students and I return home and finish the remainder of the assignments online. Some, however, choose to spend additional time in Europe, meeting up with a family members or friends to extend their exploration to additional places. Designing the class as a hybrid course, where part of the course is held face-to-face and part is conducted online, allows for flexibility in the students' lives: students can work on their assignments whether they are vacationing, volunteering, working their summer jobs, and/or taking additional summer courses.

The following summer of 2008, again, several students who had successfully completed the Educational Psychology class wanted to join the Italy study abroad experience. In order to accommodate these students, I designed and enrolled these students in an independent study course. The students completed two research assignments for their independent study. The outcomes of the first research projects were shared amongst the group in a relaxed, conversational exchange, while the other project culminated into a more formal, five-chapter research paper. In addition, the students who had enrolled in the independent study course served as peer mentors to the students taking the Educational Psychology course. The peer mentors assisted the Educational Psychology students in a lesson plan assignment and in preparation for the assessments and the final exam. The support of the peer mentors turned out to be invaluable to both the students and to me during this concentrated summer version of this required education course.

Both during and after the study abroad trip, hearing the students dialogue about the give and take of support I came to understand the value of this back and forth meaning making between those who had completed the class and those who were currently enrolled in the class. The students who were in the class gained new

understandings and the mentors gained a deeper understanding of the course material as they supported the others' sense making. That support, unexpectedly, continued to evolve when we returned to the main campus the following fall semester, eventually morphing into the Peer Mentoring Project and, later, the Relational Learning in Education course.

Mentors formalize the Peer Mentoring Project

It is common practice for students who have taken my class in prior semesters to stop into my current classes to say hello or to ask for letters of recommendation. It is a part of my job that I treasure. I typically invite them in, introduce them to the current students, and encourage them to share their wisdom about the assignments or about me as an instructor. The fall semester following our study abroad in Italy was different. Erin and Karie, two of the women who were in the summer semester Educational Psychology study abroad course, came into the class to say hello; but what I found interesting and different was that *they stayed*! Not just the first day: they returned to the class throughout the entire semester. They contributed to the discussions, assisted on assignments, and generally mentored the students all semester. I was deeply moved by their level of support and their desire to connect with the students and teach. The students, mentors, and I witnessed the manifestation of Vygotsky's (1986) theories of inner and outer speech, the role of thought and language in the active construction of knowledge, and the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) before our eyes. You see, as these women spoke out loud to explain their perception of the theories they had developed during their Educational Psychology class, they used language that was closer to the language used by the students in this class than my own, providing scaffolding (Bruner, 1990) to support those who were experiencing the content for the first time. The mentors shared stories and gave examples to support learning that fit within the students' world. These connections that the mentors helped to make – formed with language that was more familiar to the current Educational Psychology students – created a sort of bridge between the current students' understanding and the ideas I was trying to convey. Through this process of explaining their inner thoughts out loud to their classmates, the mentors constructed stronger versions of their previous understandings. As their teacher, I strive to present this new and different (enough) curriculum in ways that challenge and motivate the students. Bateson (1972) distinguished learning that was not too different, but different enough to have an impact on the learner as a way to create some kind of change. In addition, the scaffolding the mentors provided supported the students' learning when it was needed. Hearing explanations in a language more similar to their own language was an ingredient for student success throughout the semester.

What Anne has just described has been our basic approach to and understanding of mentoring in this project. Before moving on, it is important to mention that there are many forms and applications of mentoring, and that no common definition exists (see Chan, 2008; Crisp & Cruz, 2009; Jacobi, 1991 for reviews of the literature on mentoring

and examples of various interpretations of mentoring). Some mentoring projects take a structured approach, where there is a distinct differential in some aspect, such as power or status. Other mentoring projects approach the mentor/mentee dynamic as more of a remedial or tutoring relationship, where the focus is on some kind of instruction or works toward some kind of outcome, and emphasizes accountability. Still others take on an approach that places less emphasis on outcomes and more on building some kind of network of support. In some instances, mentoring projects are highly formalized. In others, the mentoring that occurs happens very informally, beginning as no more than peer-to-peer relationships in a work or education environment. Our version of mentoring has been influenced by social construction and the reflecting processes, as well as the process of learning through relationship. Specifically, our version of mentoring is grounded in reciprocity (mentors influence and "teach" mentees, but mentees influence and "teach" mentors) and the opportunity to support and guide through relationship (see Harmon, 2006 and Beyene, Anglin, Sanchez, and Ballou, 2002, who also use these aspects in defining mentoring).[1]

The Peer Mentoring Project Grows in Numbers and Action

As the story about this relationship we called *peer mentoring* got around the teacher education program, the enrollment of students in the project grew exponentially. At the same time, the organization of it became more formalized as the peer mentors asked for me to schedule meetings with them for two hours once each week throughout the semester so we could discuss and plan how they could be most useful. Together, we developed group building exercises and assignments to support the students. Some of the mentors requested to have the opportunity to co-teach topics of their choice so they could gain supervised teaching experience. For example, Jay, who was studying to be an integrated social studies teacher, voiced his desire to "get the mentors more involved in actually teaching some of the lessons in the class." As a result, Jay led a discussion on using Bloom's (1965) Taxonomy, which proposes progressive levels of learners' understanding, as a tool to strengthen lesson planning and instructional procedures, complete with a PowerPoint and handouts. He and I co-taught the chapter containing the taxonomy material to different classes for the next three semesters. He led the class discussion, divided the students into small discussion groups, and involved the students in constructing knowledge about the usefulness of such models in education.

The mentors and I named this collection of experiences the Peer Mentoring Project. My colleagues in the Educational Psychology Program supported the project and assigned a graduate student to help me organize these twenty-some students interested in expanding the experience and to conduct a qualitative study of the Peer Mentoring

[1] Authors' note: For a full description of mentoring as it is understood in this mentoring project, please see Chorba (2013).

Project. We wanted to understand what sort of effects the project was having on student and mentor learning and to identify reasons students sought out this added responsibility. To conduct the study we used reflecting processes (Andersen, 1996) as an approach to interviewing the participants. The research project was guided by the question, "what is the peer mentoring project?" a variation of a question central to the therapeutic reflecting processes, "what is it?"

Several years and hundreds of interviews later, that graduate student who was assigned to me is now Dr. Chorba and we have remained in a close collegial relationship which has led to a number of academic pursuits – including authoring this chapter together. But the relationship didn't start out that way; here is Kristen's account of those beginning days.

> *As a second-year, Educational Psychology doctoral student, I was afforded a graduate assistantship in the department. I was told that I would split my 20 work hours per week between two faculty. I cannot remember when I first learned that I would be working with and helping to conduct interviews for a peer mentoring project – I think it was even before I sat down and talked with Anne in person for the first time – but truthfully, I was less than thrilled. I had been involved with mentoring programs before and I knew exactly what to expect: required meetings, forms to fill out, and obligations. I had even been involved with mentoring programs at Kent State. I knew the drill. I figured that, at least I* had *an assistantship (funding had been cut for my previous position in a different office, based on departmental limitations) and it would pay my tuition. I'd get through it.*
>
> *The first time I met with Anne, I thought we'd have a short conversation to discuss the work I'd be doing – the project that she had worked to create – and then I would go to class, just like any other day. Our short meeting turned into a very long one, as Anne told me about her travels to and research in Cuba…and a little bit about the mentoring project. I still was not sold on the mentoring project; but I was fascinated by Anne's perspective and her passion for her teaching and research.*
>
> *I began my work assignment by interviewing both mentors and mentees who had participated in the mentoring project. This was my first big interviewing project: I wasn't stellar at it. But, in total, I interviewed, over the course of a few weeks, approximately 75 mentors and mentees, asking them about "what the project was?", "how it could be different?", and "who else we should be talking to?". Throughout these interviews, I listened to both mentors and mentees, over and over again, talk about this project as helpful, enjoyable, and something that seemed vastly different from what I had experienced in the past. This kind of mentoring did not sound so aversive.*
>
> *As I worked with the mentoring project, I started to get to know Anne, as well as some of the mentors. I was able to see the project in action, and could clearly see that there was buy-in, especially from the mentors. They took their roles seriously, and were excited to be able to help their mentees. I continued interviewing. I continued observing. I didn't have a dissertation topic that I felt strongly about at this point, so I used the topic of mentoring as the focus of a couple of class projects, and even as the focus of a small study in one of my qualitative research classes. I still didn't ever think I would write a dissertation about this mentoring project.*

> *It was only after a couple more years of my involvement in this project, and many, many conversations about it, that the idea of using the mentoring project as the focus of my dissertation became less of an idea, and more of a work in progress. At this point, I realized that a shift had occurred and, much like the mentors I had been observing over the semesters, I* had become *a part of this mentoring project, as well as a part of the lives and stories that it had influenced – and that it, and they, had become a part of mine.*

The Peer Mentoring Project Evolves

The peer mentors continued to work with the Educational Psychology classes over the following fall 2008 and spring 2009 semesters, gathering additional mentors along the way as those students who were attracted to the project completed their semester in the Educational Psychology class. In addition to mentoring the Educational Psychology students, we added two other mentoring experiences. In the first experience, the mentors served as conversation partners for international students at Kent State University. This university project was one that Kristen had been involved with and she introduced it to our class as a possible mentoring relationship. The mentors responded positively to the idea of working with international students to improve their conversational use of the English language through relationships with our class. The mentors who chose to develop the international relationships made a commitment to meet with their assigned conversation partner at least once a week throughout the semester to discuss educational and cultural experiences in the U.S. The second project involved mentoring students in a class of first graders in a nearby inner city school district. The mentors worked in the classroom of a teacher who graduated from the KSU Early Childhood Education program and had participated in the inaugural year of the study abroad mentoring experience. The mentors met with the elementary school students one or two times each week, to work with them one on one with reading projects. At the end of that semester, the mentors requested that we establish a "special topic" (not an elective credit, not a required credit) 3-credit course which would meet on campus once each week for two and a half hours.

During the summer of 2010, a new group of mentors supported the Educational Psychology students on the study abroad in Italy. This group of mentors had an even more focused purpose to learn about mentoring than the previous group. They read literature describing mentoring programs (such as Harmon, 2006) and discussed the usefulness of such programs. In addition to mentoring the students in the Educational Psychology course, these mentors conducted interviews with faculty from the Italian schools we visited and used the data to support their research projects. For example, at the Ambrit-Rome International Baccalaureate School, the mentors formed research questions about a mentoring program that school had in place which involved students in the sixth grade mentoring students in second grade. In the Florence primary school, the mentors inquired about the school's focus on internationalizing education. These

activities supported the course's qualitative research assignment, which included conducting interviews, analyzing the collected data, and writing a five-chapter research paper, fashioned after the model of a typical scholarly article. This assignment exposed these undergraduate students to a different kind of listening, thinking, and writing than they had experienced in the past. In a similar manner to the research process Kristen and I were following for the Peer Mentoring Research Project, we used reflecting processes to support the writers in this course. Students shared their writing process with others in the class, collaborating on and peer editing each other's work. They seemed to be energized by the process and reported being "less afraid" of this shared approach; this alternative to writing in isolation, which they often described with fear and dread. The students and I had been encouraged by the words of Ken Gergen (2009) we discovered in one of our course readings, in which he said: "knowing comes into existence only through social participation. Acts of research only become intelligible and worth doing through a relationship that precedes the acts themselves. In effect, 'I speak with others, and therefore I can know'" (p. 229). I believe this approach to writing could and does have great benefits for increasing student interest in and building their comfort level with doing future research and also coming to view themselves as potential graduate school material.

To illustrate this point, Erin talks about her pursuit of a graduate degree from University of Michigan upon graduation with her bachelor's degree in the teacher education program where she served as a peer mentor for several semesters. She recently discussed the influence of the relational learning experience on her confidence to enter graduate school immediately after graduation:

> *That first trip to Italy was one of the most important experiences of my life. After studying abroad for a few weeks I was able to harness that experience into more international ones. December of that same year, I traveled to Cuba with Anne as the only undergraduate amongst graduate students. Because of the trust and support I felt Anne gave me (from herself and the mentors) I knew that this was an experience that could only help me. This trip to Cuba was the first time I had been asked to do my own research project that involved interviewing others as well as framing research questions in a way that could be focused on my interests—not just the interests of my major. We wrote about our research together. We invited and added the perspectives of the others who shared our experiences. Looking back to receiving this grounding so early in my undergraduate education was definitely powerful and definitely played a role in my pursuing graduate school immediately after graduation. I do not think I understood the significance of this experience at the time of the course. I believe the right amount of scaffolding allowed me to easily and realistically make international experiences part of my professional life . . . working in the peer mentoring program and understanding the infinite ways in which relational learning manifests in my everyday life gave me not only tangible take-aways for my professional academic career, but has also helped me understand, appreciate and navigate the interpersonal dynamics that exist between people, within organizations, and larger contexts of society. In the future, I would like to use these understandings to*

> *promote educational programs that highlight the ways in which power and privilege manifest between groups of people exposing the systems, which perpetuate inequality in societies. Such dynamics must be addressed in order to make large-scale change to move toward equality. Overall, relational learning has allowed me to think more deeply and question what is going on besides what just "seems" to be going on in interpersonal dynamics.*

Since graduating with her master's degree, Erin teaches writing to students from foreign countries in the university setting. In addition, she continues to support the Peer Mentoring Project, making impromptu visits to the Educational Psychology classes and providing reflections on her experience with relational learning.

Formalizing the Relational Learning Course

The next step toward formalizing the Relational Learning in Education course came from the impetus of my departmental colleagues. They asked me to submit the course outline to the curriculum committees in order to establish the class as an elective course in the college curriculum and to make it a portion of my teaching load. We took the course through every required curricular procedure at the university and it was approved as a 3-hour elective course. It is currently housed within the College of Education, Health and Human Services, but is available to all majors throughout the student body. The course was developed with three main components, including a qualitative research and writing project, a mentoring/community experience, and participation in what we called *peer assessment*, using reflecting processes.

Each student in the Relational Learning in Education course carries out a qualitative research project throughout the semester, which is a more in-depth, fleshed-out version of the research project the mentors had been conducting in Italy. This main assignment begins with formal participation in a Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) course on research and ethics, which is training method used by our University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) for all students, faculty, and staff who conduct any form of research involving human subjects. The projects the students complete fall under the Peer Mentoring Project (now the Relational Learning Project) umbrella, requiring annual IRB approval, as they include some form of qualitative data collection, typically in the form of participant observation and interviews. In part, I use the assignment as an impetus to examine the ethics and process of research. The reading assignments that provide a foundation for the research processes are a collection of books and articles Kristen and I read in our own graduate programs – many of which were intentionally chosen from qualitative research and social constructionist literature. For example, they read about the role of a participant observer in the research process (Spradley, 1980); about qualitative approaches to collecting and managing data (Marshall & Rossman, 1999); and about interpreting data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The students review literature on mentoring (including Harmon, 2006), social constructionist

approaches to learning and leading (including Gergen, 2009; Edwards, Gandini & Forman, 1993), and Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (including Kozulin, 2004). These excerpts introduce ideas for the students to discuss and consider during their research process.

During summer semesters, in order to prepare for our study abroad in Italy (which is also organized under the Relational Learning in Education course title), we view the historic documentary *Not Just Anyplace* in order to give our planned 2-day workshop at Reggio Emilia and their Remida Center a context. Reggio Emilia is an ever-evolving approach to early childhood education which began after World War II, with the guidance of the late Loris Malaguzzi in the northern Italian city of the same name. This thriving educational system continues with the supportive efforts of parents, teachers, and the general community (Gandini, 1994; Malaguzzi, 1993). The students and I met with one of the founding teachers of Reggio Emilia, Lella Gandini. Her inspiring words both resonated with our class and challenged us to continue thinking about education from the fresh perspective of the child.

It was after one, particular, study abroad trip to Italy, we returned to KSU and began exploring ideas of how we could begin to connect the Peer Mentoring Project to the local communities and schools around the university the upcoming fall semester – in the spirit of Reggio Emilia. Many of the students had considered this idea of connectedness in their research papers, and the class had discussed the idea quite a bit. These conversations and the influence on the mentors that experiences with Reggio Emilia had, led Michael to propose the idea of working with relational learning in the larger community. This is how the second mentoring opportunity – mentoring students in an inner city first grade class, which was described earlier in this chapter – came to fruition. Reflecting on his experiences as a mentor that summer in Italy, and the desire to follow the Reggio approach in connecting to the community, Michael recalled:

> *The vast majority of the mentors, like me, became fascinated with this mentoring role and re-enrolled for the class the next semester in hopes that because we had already established a basis of understanding, we could take the program to the next level. We conveyed this information to Anne, questioning whether or not there was anything further we could do to help not only students at Kent State but to put our increasing knowledge to work in the surrounding community. Luckily, Anne had kept contact with [a former student], who was an educator in a nearby community. He invited us to assist his class and we set out a few times each week to help him and his first graders. This was a unique inner city experience because the mentors came from different programs; early childhood, special education, and adolescent education were the majors of this cohort of mentors. It made for a lot of cross talk and critical thinking between mentors because of the different philosophies our programs had exposed us to at KSU.*

The mentors and I have remained in a collaborative relationship with that teacher and have followed him to a new school, where he now teaches third grade.

Reflecting Processes in Reading, Writing, and Research

In the Relational Learning class, the students and I spend time reading together (literally reading out loud to each other, a practice I strongly encourage in my classes), discussing the readings using reflecting processes, and practicing research approaches as we make observations and try out interview questions with each other. I am often struck with the insight that comes as students reflect on their actions as researchers.

One particular day's reflecting process focused on the students' realization that much of the answers a researcher receives from a participant depend on the way a question is framed or, for that matter, what question is asked or not asked. Feminist researcher Oakley (1991) discussed a similar perspective on the constitution of knowledge, emphasizing the researcher's influences on what is known in research. These students discuss the social construction of research topics, research questions, and research ethics. We talk about transparency, intentionality, and the responsibility of the researcher to maintain balance as they report outcomes and tell the story of the participants in their own voices. Students accomplish this partly by personally transcribing the interviews they conduct and by reporting themes supported by direct quotations of the participants including mentees, conversation partners, and/or other members of the community they may have included in the research project. They learn to triangulate data by including semistructured interviews, direct active participation and observations, and to review written documents, in their shared reflections with the class (Kvale, 1996; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Morrison, 2001).

As a doctoral candidate/researcher, I used many of the same practices that the students experienced as they worked on their research projects in the Relational Learning course. Because our processes were similar, several of the students I worked with while conducting interviews for my dissertation experienced the "other side" of the reflecting processes that they had gone through, as researchers. I used a reflecting processes approach in interviewing those who participated in my study, making a point to keep the conversation open and sustainable. After the interviews, I invited mentors to continue their conversations with me, literally on their interviews – within the document itself. I sent them segments of the transcripts from our conversations, with my notes and thoughts, and invited them to interact with them in any way they wished. They responded in varying ways, but almost two-thirds of them chose to continue our conversation in some form.

The reflecting processes have worked well as a frame for collecting and analyzing data in this project as well as others (Morrison, 2001). Using the reflecting processes, the students shared the transcriptions from their interviews with each other and invited comments from those who had witnessed similar experiences and interviews. Those comments became part of the data, which was included for analysis. Next, students shared their interpretations and themes with each other, soliciting a second layer of

responses. The back and forth nature of the reflections enriched the data and, ultimately, the writing. Finally, they peer reviewed one another's work, and made edits and corrections while learning how to be purposeful in the writing process of another. By the time the final papers reached me, they had had several sets of eyes on them and scores of peer edits. I noticed that the writing improved with every version of writing and rewriting they accomplished.

Offering an assignment which allowed the students to have a choice in their research was important to me. I believe choice is critical in learning and in sustaining motivation. In the Relational Learning class, a number of students have told me that they, too, find having a choice in their work important and enjoyable. Contrasting it with other classes she's taken, Heather even said that she is "so used to having guidelines for everything . . . [and is] so used to being told to do this, have this, and include this, blah-blah-blah-blah," that the ability to create her own project in class made doing the work interesting and rewarding.

While this assignment has evolved, morphed, and continues to change, it remains the foundation of the Relational Learning in Education course. It is an assignment which allows students to explore a topic of importance to them, while working to write with thoughtfulness and focus. Many of the mentors who have been successful in past semesters attempt to quell the writing anxieties of those students new to the Relational Learning in Education course by insuring them that "the paper writes itself".

Building a Community of Relational Learners

This mentoring project – and the engagement and experiences that have come from it – was not created overnight. It took time, dedication, hard work, openness to new ideas, and a desire to make space for conversation, exploration, and learning. It has evolved over the course of semesters and years, and continues to evolve and change. The mentoring project has become a community of learners and a community of peers, where relational learning and the building of relationships is central to the learning process.

As part of my dissertation research, one thing I asked participants to consider was how they understood relational learning. Their responses took two forms, as they talked about relational learning in terms of a class in which they participated and acted as mentors, and as an idea, where they actively participated in learning and the building of relationships. Emma described relational learning as "learning through the relationships that you build with others and helping facilitate your learning through having relationships with others and learning by doing, but also learning by having support from other people around you." Her description highlights the back and forth nature of a relational approach to learning, and focuses on the importance of active engagement and co-construction throughout the entire process. Mike summed it up simply, saying that relational learning is "learning through empathy and learning through relationship . . .

[or] learning through empathy and through contact with others, and it's very socially constructive".

Part of the value - and magic - of this project has been how it has evolved and changed. Just as this project was shaped by the diverse voices and interests of those who were a part of this community, other mentoring projects will be influenced by and grown from the unique voices present in them.

Finding Value in Reflecting Processes and Relational Learning

During the course and throughout the interviews conducted, we learned that many of the mentors found the approaches used to be beneficial, in a variety of ways. Mike speaks to the value of relational learning and, specifically, using it as an approach to education, as these *ways of being* invite the participation of future educators into a larger conversation about the possibilities for education in the future. He said,

> *When I think of relational learning several thoughts come to mind. My initial thoughts [are] about the strong relationships I made during my tenure as a mentor with others involved in the program. The relationships were founded on the passion for education and helping our fellow man even though we came from vastly different walks of life. We did not always agree on the means to achieve our goals inside the education system. However, we were always willing to listen, which seems to have been lost on the bureaucratic side of education. The beauty of relational learning is [that] it showed the potential which education as a system can become when involving those who are already teachers with those aspiring to join the profession.*

He goes on to describe the usefulness of using reflecting processes to foster listening for the purpose of hearing his peers, saying:

> *It is the most helpful process, which we engaged in weekly, was when we would let one person speak and the others would listen and reflect upon their words; then those who were listening would speak about what they heard and the individual who originally spoke listened and wrestled with their comments. It is a humbling experience to listen to someone and not counter their point of view if you have objections. It is the kind of communication and values the education subcommittee at the state department would benefit to have with educators.*

Mike's sentiments were shared by a number of other mentors, who also commented on how their participation in the mentoring project helped them to be better able to *hear* others and allow space in their conversations for a genuine dialogue.

Mentors also commented about how the relationships they built within their mentoring community allowed them to be open with each other and discuss each other's perspectives - even if they did not always agree with those perspectives. Gergen (2009) looks to the possibilities that can open when education focuses on relationships as opposed to individuals, we enter a new world of possibility. Our concern shifts from what is taking place "within minds" to our life together. And within this space of collaborative

meaning-making, we can appreciate our multiple traditions and their various potentials. Further, we can ask about the kind of world we wish to create for the future—both locally and globally. When education is sensitive to relationship, we realize that in terms of future well-being, "we are all in it together (p. 269)."

Challenges in Mentoring and Relational Learning Experiences

Even though this project has experienced quite a bit of success, there have also been many challenges and challenging situations that have come along. While some of these challenges presented as difficult experiences, many of the challenges were also viewed, overall, as positive. These challenges and opportunities for growth manifested in the relationships mentors made with other mentors, as well as with their mentees.

There were challenges related to the implementation and logistics of the course, itself, as well. In creating the course, it had to be approved by more than one curriculum committee, as well as various administrators – making it a lengthy, time-consuming process. Less-formalized (i.e., non-credit options for participation) may be easier and faster to implement, but for-credit courses do go through multiple levels of scrutiny before they are approved and scheduled to run. Another challenge is one posed by students' schedules and commitments. As an elective (i.e., not required for degree completion) course, students who enrolled in the Relational Learning course needed to feel certain that they had the additional time to devote to the course – often while juggling other responsibilities including part- or full-time jobs; families; and regular, full-time course loads. Finally, there is also the challenge of cost. As a for-credit, university course, there is a three-credit hour tuition fee associated with it. If a student is taking part-time courses, or enrolls in courses over the "full time" threshold where tuition is set (i.e., enrollment in 11 – 16 credit hours is the same fee; additional credit hours would incur an additional fee), it may be difficult for students to commit to enrolling in the course and, as a result, needing to come up with the additional tuition money to pay for a course that is not required for degree completion. Finally, there is the challenge of keeping the opportunities and curriculum of the Relational Learning course fresh and relevant to students (although, we believe, it is a *good* challenge to have). Because of the relational nature of this course, as well as my desire to work with students to create positive and relevant experiences, there is a lot of time and planning that goes into creating connections for and setting up mentoring and relational learning opportunities and investing in the success and growth of the mentors. The need to be flexible, to listen to students' suggestions, and to be willing to try out new things – and to let go of things that are not working – is challenging but also rewarding, as it leads to ever-changing, ever-growing interpretations of the mentoring project and the Relational Learning course.

Conclusions

All of the information in this chapter has been provided to describe the foundation upon which the Relational Learning class and the peer-mentoring project were built. It was a process that involved time, commitment, dedication, openness to new ideas and directions, and the desire to create space for learning, exploration, and conversation. We continue to offer the opportunity to students who wish to participate. The course continues to evolve as the desires of new mentors are heard. Project options have also evolved, and currently include the option to develop a grant proposal. The mentors who have chosen this option have learned to write grants to support work they have done in the inner city schools. Kristen and I have shared our experiences with departments within the university and with programs outside of the university, through conversations and conference presentations. Most recently, Kristen has developed and will be offering an online workshop on mentoring, grounded in the advice she received from the mentors during her interviews.

As I wrote earlier, it feels odd to write about any part of the course as if it is my idea alone. For us, relational learning has been a way to learn, share, teach, build, connect, and understand. The opportunity to do all of these things has come from a commitment to intentionally create space for exploration and conversation. We have shared our experiences across the U.S. and in a couple of other countries. When they can, the mentors join us to tell our relational learning story. We hope that it is a story that will continue for a very long time.

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Co-Creating Joyful Learning and Augmenting Social Skills in Children by Employing Creative Drama

Charru Sharma

In modern societies, schooling has been institutionalized as a formal setting for the training of human mind. As such it assumes the status of an important developmental task for a growing child and constitutes a site for interaction between an individual and society. The aspirations and demands of society at any point of time get reflected in the pattern of schooling, which in turn shapes the societal demands. The ideals and choices of society, therefore, are crucial for the structuring of its school system. India as one of the rapidly developing countries of modern world aspires to train its future citizens as competent persons skilled for diverse professional competencies. Under the influence of various changes in the social milieu including job market, life is becoming more specialized and mechanized. Concomitantly the teaching-learning process is becoming more and more complex. Lives of children as a result are found to be taxing and stressful. The teachers, parents and students often realize that the entire process of schooling is becoming distasteful. The growing incidence of mental health problems in school children is correlated with the school stress. There is evidence that stress can be reduced by providing active and involved participation of children in school (Dutta, 1996; Kapur, 1997; Mukhopadhyaya & Kumar, 1999).

This study endeavoured to make children's school learning joyful, productive and humane without compromising its quality through the use of Creative Drama (CD). The research involved grade three students studying in two schools in the same local area for a period of two years and six months. Children from one school constituted the *intervention group,* that participated in the CD workshops and the other group was not exposed to CD was the *control group*. Creativity and problem solving tasks were used to assess the impact of CD on the social and cognitive development of children. In order to frame this work in a conceptual perspective we will begin by examining the relevant theoretical and sociocultural aspects related to schooling, engaged learning and CD.

Indian Schooling: Traditional to Contemporary

The idea of education in India has traditionally been conceptualized as the process of emancipation or liberation from all kinds of sufferings (sā vidyā yā vimuktaye). Knowledge is conceived to be an empowering experience, which helps the person as well as society to realize their goals (Misra, 2002). Education traditionally meant to enable an

individual to proceed towards light from darkness and towards immortality from mortality (*Tamasoma Jyotirgamaya, Mrutyorma Amrityamgamaya*). Education is the means for self-realization and self-expression. It helps in bringing out the best in a person. In brief, it promotes physical, intellectual, social, emotional and spiritual development of children (Mohanty, 1994). In order to disseminate knowledge, the process of schooling in India has gone through several phases, starting with the oral tradition (Altekar, 1965). Since Vedic period (ca.*1750*–500 BCE), memorization contemplation, and meditation are used as key learning strategies. While memorization constituted the dominant pedagogical practice, interpretation, and dialogue had their place and offered considerable space for creativity (Rao, 2005). The educational system aimed at developing students' personality by eulogizing the sense of self-respect, by encouraging the feeling of self-confidence, by inculcating the virtue of self-restraint and by fostering the powers of judgment. It laid stress on the social duties and promoted social efficiency (Altekar, 1957; Raina & Srivastava, 1999).

India also has a strong tradition of performative art. Drama and dramaturgical analysis have a long history in the cultural life both at the theoretical and practical levels. Their practice was flexible, interactive and life oriented. Texts were important but the context and performance were equally important. Theatre (Natya) was the center of focus of all artistic activity since the times of sage Bharat who has analyzed in what is known as the "Natya Shastra", which was written during the period between 200 BCE and 200 CE. It is said that natya includes everything in its fold. It could blend any branch of art or craft.

> *Theatre helps visualization of human experiences in a concrete and meaningful form. It draws elements from all available sources to achieve the desired results*. (Varadpande, 1979, p. 10).

Achievements in the domains of sculpture, poetry, drama etc. illustrate the close linkages between the text and context. As a matter of fact, the archaic system of imparting learning in India- the *gurukul* system where teachers and students lived together had a strong component of practical learning. This tradition was marginalized during the colonial period when the British actively introduced measures destroying the indigenous pattern of learning. Interestingly British came to India at a point when India had a larger literacy rate than that of England. Tragically when the British left India, a large part of the Indian masses was illiterate (Dharampal, 1983). India, that was a learning society, on the eve of its political independence suffered from mass illiteracy. The British rule created subservience among Indians and as a result there emanated a distance between the rulers and the ruled. The education system was not aloof from the culture of distance wherein the taught and the teacher were at different platforms. In order for the British to establish a subservient society, education had to depart from a knowledge paradigm to that of memorization skills. Kumar (1991, p. 14) points out that, "the presence of British knowledge or curriculum (as embodied in the textbook) played a prominent role in perpetuating rote learning".

> *Pedagogy during the British period appears to have been pulled towards two different directions. On the one hand, memorization and repetition suited the British administration since this kind of learning cultivated subservient, obedient and efficient colonized citizens. On the other hand, the British wanted to produce educated persons similar to themselves. With this goal in mind, they introduced modern curriculum and pedagogy. However, their attempts at educational reform were not successful and the reason perhaps was that the method introduced was not consonant with traditional pedagogy*.(Clarke, 2001, p. 44).

Well-planned measures were taken for the revival of the lost education system. Education reforms were carried out prominently by Mahatma Gandhi who introduced the concept of Buniyadi Talim (Basic Education) emphasizing participative and action based learning. Pedagogically it subscribes to the view that children's learning new skills and acquiring knowledge depends on their will to learn, on their appreciation of their teacher's effort and on their skill to work in groups. Rabindra Nath Tagore and Gijubhai, built institutional models based on teaching that respects children's will to learn and their active participation in the learning process (Kumar, 1997). There were other initiatives taken up by Zakir Husain, Krishnamurti and Aurbindo (Pathak, 2002; Shotton, 1998; Sinha, 2005).

Learning by Doing

There is research evidence that knowledge acquires deeper roots when children participate as active members in the process of learning. Passive classroom learning can make children as storehouses of information that do not add to their schematic framework unless there is engaged learning. Developmental theorists like Piaget, Vygotsky and Rogoff have emphasized the acquisition of knowledge through active involvement of the child. Piaget focused on the active involvement of the child in individual terms while playing with certain objects and making sense of the world through that activity. Knowledge according to Piaget was a processor or repertoire of actions rather than an inventory of stored information (Thomas, 1992).

In his early writings, Piaget provided the convincing argument that individual development in resolving cognitive conflicts is facilitated by cooperation between peers. Some of Piaget's (1928/1977) statements about the mechanisms of social influence have parallels in Vygotsky's theory. For example, "one might suppose that it is the individual that holds the truth up against society, but individual independence is a social fact, a product of civilization" (p. 220). Piaget's statements to the effect that reflection is internalized dialogue resemble Vygotsky's chief principle that higher mental functions are internalized from social interaction: "Reflection is an internal discussion . . . In social conflict is born discussion, first simple dispute, then discussion terminating in a conclusion. It is this last action which, internalized and applied to oneself, becomes reflection" (cited in Rogoff, 1990).

As per the Piagetian approach, teachers are not viewed as being a source of knowledge expected to fill their pupils' minds. Nor is the teacher someone pleasant who

simply displays equipment and materials in the classroom and then stands back while children explore the objects on their own. Instead, the teacher is expected to achieve a proper balance between actively guiding or directing children's thinking patterns and providing opportunities for children to engage in active exploration by themselves (Thomas, 1992).

Vygotskian approach focus more on the role of children as active participants in their own development. Children seek, structure, and even demand the assistance of those around them in learning how to solve problems of all kinds. They actively observe social activities, participating as they can. Vygotsky suggested that development occurs in play, which is the "leading activity" (the central goal) in development during the preschool years, from 3 to 7. Vygotsky emphasized the affective and motivational aspects of play, suggesting that in play children enjoy ignoring the ordinary uses of objects and actions in order to subordinate them to imaginary meanings and situations. Rogoff (1990) emphasizes that children's cognitive development is embedded in the context of social relationships. She posits that when children are assisted by guidance in activities, it helps them to understand new situations and they are better equipped to manage problem solving.

> *Ideally, the order of the classroom should emerge through collaboration. In significant degree, this can be accomplished by shifting from monologue to dialogue as the primary form of teaching* (Gergen, 2009, p. 248).

It is crucial therefore to provide opportunities for children to socially interact with each other even in the school learning experiences. Learning together, taking collective decisions, solving problems as a group require sharing, cooperation, understanding and empathy on part of the group members. The joyless pedagogical exchange that is prevalent in the majority of Indian schools can be altered by incorporating play in the form of CD. There is an inbuilt element of exploration, cooperation, creativity, problem solving, imagination, social interaction and responsibility in CD. The study conducted employed CD and explored its impact on the social and cognitive development of primary school children.

Creative Drama (CD)

We will first describe Creative Drama and how it has been used with children across the world. Slade (1954) published his book Child Drama, based on experimental work he had been conducting for twenty years. He said that child drama is an art form in its own right; it is not an activity that has been invented by someone, but it is the actual behavior of human beings. The word drama comes from the Greek word *dro* - "I do, I struggle." In drama – i.e. by doing and struggling – the child discovers life and self through emotional and physical attempt, and then through repetitive practice evolves into, which is dramatic play. The personal experiences are exciting and can develop into group experiences.

CD is created by a group of children, guided, but not directed by the teacher/leader as stated by Ward (1960). It is always played and acted on the basis of spontaneous dialogue and action, and is never written down because written plays become formal scripts to be memorized. Informal drama may be created from a story, a poem, an experience, a historical event, or an idea. Creative dramatics is not for the talented few nor its purpose to entertain an audience. Participation is all that is important, and the experience of the child who lacks talent is often as fruitful and as enjoyable as that of the child with marked dramatic ability.

According to the definition formulated by the Children's Theatre Association of America, CD is an improvisational, non-exhibitional, process-centered form of drama in which participants are guided by a leader to imagine, enact and reflect upon human experiences. Although CD traditionally has been used with children and young people, the process is appropriate for all ages.

One of the most frequently stated aims of education today is the maximal growth of the child both as an individual and as a member of society. In McCaslin's (1984) view, the aim of modern curriculum is to develop basic skills in which reading, writing, arithmetic, science, social studies, and the arts are stressed; to develop and maintain good physical and mental health; to enhance one's ability to think; to clarify values and communicate beliefs and hopes; to develop an understanding of beauty, using various media such as words, color, sound and movement; to grow creatively and thus experience one's own creative powers. Many of these objectives of modern curriculum are shared by the process of CD in particular, creativity and aesthetic development; the ability to think critically; social growth and the ability to work cooperatively with others; the enhancement of communication skills; the development of moral and spiritual values and knowledge of one's self.

The significance of arts education in the holistic development of children has been demonstrated by Geoghegan (1994) who reported that children's lack of arts education inhibits their ability to communicate ideas spontaneously, respond with feeling, and discern quality from commercial junk. Role-playing helped students express themselves creatively and build community in a "tribal", cooperative-learning setting. Shamala (1997) has proposed a conceptual model that integrates art education activities with that of language learning activities, so that the teacher can ensure child-centered joyful learning of language. Children do develop confidence and master language competence through group work and interaction.

Very few studies, however, deal with developmental outcomes of drama among young children. In an important study, Smilansky (1968) studied two groups of disadvantaged children in kindergarten school, one exposed to opportunities for what she terms "socio-dramatic play" and the other without such opportunities. She found that children who had exposure to socio-dramatic play had more highly developed skills in the social, cognitive, emotional, imaginative and language areas. Both Smilansky's study

(1968) and Rosen's replication (1974) with culturally disadvantaged preschoolers show that practice in socio-dramatic play improves role-taking skills, as well as problem-solving behavior and cooperation.

The role of drama in the development of social constructs in children has been empirically confirmed by various researches. Fink's (1976) extensive study suggests that drama activities for preschoolers lead to development of what he calls "social perspectivism"-the ability to comprehend the various social relations inherent in a situation involving a group of individuals. Play appears to be important in the development of novel, adaptive behavior as well as in the socialization and practice of established skills (Lancy, 1980; Vandenberg, 1980). For example, a study with third-graders from various ethnic backgrounds noted that children benefited most from collaborative writing as they balanced their planning and revising activities with playful approaches (Daiute & Dalton, 1993).

Greater involvement in dramatic play increases the role-taking ability of four-year-olds (Burns & Brainerd, 1979). Role playing a story not only results in a greater understanding of cause and effect, but also of the motivations and emotional responses of the characters since, children who role-play focus more on the psychological and character-oriented events of the story than the physical ones (Galda, 1984). In an interesting study, Jomon (1996) noted that children exposed to a creative environment and methodology took up further responsibilities. CD provides a rich, stimulating and creative environment for children. Guss (2005) examined the aesthetic, reflective and cultural dimensions in children's dramatic playing, confirming that drama-aesthetic interaction in early childhood drama is, in fact, social intervention.

By using sociodrama with preschool students, Deanna Marie Pecaski McLennan (2010) found that the students had experienced incredible growth in their ability to explore and problem solve within the workshops. By providing students with legitimate, complex, and nonlinear approaches for personal exploration and expression, the individuality of students is valued as they become empowered through sociodrama, a powerful agent of change for today's preschool.

The studies indicate the potential of drama to recreate the social order and to challenge the existing patterns of the social network within the classroom setup. CD helps unfold the latent endowments of children in a playful manner. The empirical evidence highlights the impact of CD on the social development of children. It provides an opportunity for children to understand human relationships as they enact a variety of characters and can thus be used as a tool for social intervention. It can be an effective mode for interpersonal learning in the classroom and assist the improvement of peer relations. Children can thus develop a means to cope and adjust with others in the society and thus contribute to the society in the best possible way.

The preceding overview reveals the necessity to bring joy to the classrooms and to foster creativity in children. As supported earlier on the current pedagogical practices

promote attainment of information rather than acquisition of knowledge making children live under constant pressure and score high in the examinations based on rote memorization. On the contrary classroom interaction should be such that promotes co-construction of knowledge by all the participants involved in the learning process, i.e. both students and teachers. In order to transform the classroom into an engaging and stimulating space for children, innovative means of teaching should be employed. CD is one such mode by which we can capture the interest of children and develop their creative abilities to the fullest.

The empirical evidence suggests the need to include innovative strategies in the classroom processes. It has highlighted how CD can be instrumental in making learning more meaningful and a creative endeavor for children. CD provides opportunities for children to enhance their cognitive and social abilities. While teaching as we know it does not provide space for dialogue between teachers and students, CD offers an opportunity for a dialogic learning process. Children engaged in CD realize that learning is not passive consumption, but requires active involvement (Sharma, 2014). Children become more aware and observant; develop concentration and problem solving skills. Children become better communicators; group interaction is also enhanced as children constantly share ideas, thoughts and feelings with their mates. An understanding of human feelings and relationships develops in children when they portray a variety of characters. The research described further down studied the impact of CD on the cognitive and social abilities of primary school children. The present paper focuses on one of such abilities, that of ‘cooperation’.

The Present Study

The pedagogic exchange in classrooms offers exceedingly few opportunities for children to build social skills and enhance creativity. The focus of the teachers is on the subject matter comprising the curriculum. Even the curriculum is taught in a manner that children have no agency in the teaching-learning process. They become mere recipients of information from the teacher.The text books are constructed in such a way as to prepare students to score well during the examinations. Education, thus has become a mere tool of passing on information to the children without teaching them how to bridge the gap between school learning and real life. CD in this research has been employed to create harmony between learning and real life. It embraces the development of children primarily as children participating in the myriad activities of CD i.e. theatre games, voice and sound activities, rhythm and movements, mime, improvisations. The nature of CD activities is such that they also provide the opportunity for children to participate in individual as well as group activities.

The study was conducted to assess the impact of CD on the cognitive and social development of primary school children. In order to achieve this goal a two pronged strategy was used. First, children were followed up through a two and a half years CD

intervention programme. Second, the theater experts working with children (n=13) were interviewed using a semi structured interview schedule.

Methodology

The research was conducted in two primary state-run schools of Paschim Vihar located in the northwest zone of Delhi. At the onset of the study, there were 80 children, half of which belonged to the intervention group and the other half to the control group. Out of the total number of children participating in the study, there were 43 girls and 37 boys. However the sample somewhat decreased over time owing to unforeseen factors (e.g., transfer of parents), some children dropped out that had the replaced with new ones. The mean age of both the groups was 7 years. Most of the children belonged to a middle class background, fathers employed in the government or non-government sector and mothers being housewives.

The participating children were from grade III through grade V in two state-run schools. Group I was the *intervention group* that had children who participated in the CD workshops and Group II was the *control group* that had children who were not exposed to CD. The study was longitudinal and involved assessment on five occasions after an interval of six- eight months depending on the school schedule. There was a baseline and an endline assessment for both groups while intermittently three assessments were carried out. What was measured was children's creativity and their ability for solving problems. The intervention consisted of CD workshops provided to Group I for a period of two years and six months.[1]. The intervention was incorporated in the proper school activity. Creativity and problem solving tasks to assess children were selected after conducting a pilot study to ensure their relevance.

	Phase I	**Phase I**	**Phase I**	**Phase I**
Number of children	40	41	44	37
Observations (in Hours)	122	123	122	124

Table 1: *Details of the observations made during CD workshops*
Note: The number of CD workshops and hours dedicated to them has varied across the different phases due to changes / variation in the number of working days and holidays.

[1] The intervention was carried out upon the permission of school principals and class teachers.

The impact of CD on verbal and non-verbal creativity in three domains i.e., elaboration, originality, and flexibility (Mehdi, 1973), in problem solving and in scholastic achievement (in terms of performance in school examinations) was assessed on five different occasions. The following measures were used to assess children for:

I. Creativity Tasks

a) Verbal- What will happen if

i) sugar starts growing on trees?

ii) a rope comes down from the sky?

b) Non-Verbal- Test of creativity by Baqer Mehdi included three activities- Picture Construction, Picture Completion, Triangles and Ellipses. The test intended to measure the child's ability to deal with figural content in a creative manner.

II. Problem Solving Tasks

a) Verbal

i) Solve a problem

ii) Picture Sequencing

b) Non-Verbal

i) Find the way

A baseline assessment of children's development took place before conducting the CD workshops. An end line assessment was conducted towards the end of the study. The control group did not receive the CD intervention but performance on creativity and problem solving tasks and school learning were assessed for comparison reasons. In order to fulfil the objectives, intensive participant observations of children were made to track the social and cognitive development of the intervention group of children. The researcher maintained an observational record of children in a diary during the conduct of each activity. Care was taken to record the general behavior and response of children to each of the activities and also to record specific behavior of each child. Also in-depth case profiles of five children belonging to the intervention group were drawn.

Analysis

The approach of the study was mainly qualitative and different aspects of cognitive and social development were observed as children participated in CD

workshops. The strategy was to follow the children systematically for a period of two years and six month at different points of time. Observations made during the entire course of study were studied in depth to evolve meaningful categories. Each of the observations was then studied in detail and were placed in subcategories of two broad categories i.e. Cognitive and Social Development. These broad categories were further sub divided. The sub categories that emerged under social development were: Self and Interactive. As part of this paper I will focus on one trait, that of *Cooperation*.

Cooperation- As defined for the purpose of this study it refers to working together or coordinating with a shared understanding.

The observations made in Phase I prominently featured children as separate entities and not as a group. They did not work collectively on tasks or support each other. Cooperative skills among children were not visible among children in Phase I of CD workshops. Children showed signs of competition rather than cooperation. Even in activities involving group work, children would very soon approach the researcher for seeking her intervention in resolving group conflicts. It was also observed that even when children were not working in groups they would complain "ma'am yeh haath maar raha hai" *(ma'am he is hitting me with his hand),* "ma'am yeh baat kar rahen hain" *(ma'am they are talking),* "ma'am yeh bolte ja rahe hain" *(ma'am they are continuously talking)* etc. In fact, children were always ready to blame each other and to point out each other's mistake or wrong doing.

By the time they entered Phase II, the researcher involved children in activities in which children had to work together. Children were deliberately asked to pick up bags of other children from the classroom in order to create space for conducting the workshop. Since children were sitting on the rugs spread on the floor so they had to keep their bags aside to empty the room. At times when some children were outside drinking water or using the washroom, their bags were left on the rugs and the other children would not bother to put them aside. This habit of picking up the bag of other children was gradually developed which led to children to feel concerned and offer a helping hand to their peers in clearing the space for CD workshops. Continuous group activities helped instill a feeling of belongingness in children. At the earlier stage children making fun of each other was a norm. If a child would say or do something unusual, they would laugh at her/him. Gradually, this derogatory attitude was replaced by being supportive towards others. On one occasion when Vaishali had lost her earring in the class, all the children helped her find it. Comradeship had gradually become a practice with children.

In the Cat and Mouse activity during Phase III, a strong feeling of togetherness and cooperation was observed. In this game some children formed a circle by holding hands, and the rest of the children were divided in two groups, one group became cats and the other became mice. All mice could move anywhere inside or outside the circle but cats had to stay outside. Children who formed the circle helped to save the mice from the cats and the cats would get together and hatch plans to catch the mice. During the activity, there was

teamwork observed in each of the two groups of cats and mice. Each of their moves was a group decision and a feeling of togetherness was visible. The barriers among children and adjustment issues were no longer part of the group.

As part of an activity children were taught to make face masks, they shared the chart paper and other stationery with others. A child who didn't have a chart paper was offered one by another child who asked the researcher "ma'am yeh chart paper nahi laye, hum inhe de dein?" *(ma'am she has not brought the chart paper can I give her?).* When they had all made masks and had to put them on, children happily tied each other's string. All children helped each other to wear their mask. Even during the daily recess the researcher had helped develop the habit of eating together as a group rather than eat alone or in various small groups. It was overwhelming to see children share their lunch with others especially offering to those who did not bring food from home. Archit, a child coming from a low income family did not normally bring food to eat during recess. A boy Naman, used to bring one extra chapatti *(bread)* that he daily offered Archit. It was very uplifting to see this beautiful friendship blossom.

Figure 1. *Creating a balancing chair*

Good cooperation among children also led to better understanding and coordination as they participated in drama activities. Children were now as a unit, a positive change that was visible in Phase IV of the workshops. Children even taught their peers and helped them practice in order to teach them something they found difficult to do. Like in the gibberish activity, some children could not produce the sounds so others practiced with them to finally make them learn. This was a good example of collaborative learning. Children could comfortably share objects, ideas, stationery, lunch with their peers. The concept of apologizing to peers for a mistake was absent in the group until now. In this phase, children not only realized their mistakes but even sincerely said "sorry" to anyone they hurt even if unintentionally.

Figure 2. *Enacting an accident scene*

Children were more than willing to offer help to others. As seen when one day an improvisation had to be presented which was discussed on the previous day, there were two children who were absent on the day of the presentation so two other children promptly offered to replace them. In a body movement exercise children had to work in pairs. One child had to curve his body backwards and his partner had to support him. It was the mutual cooperation of children that lead to an amazingly good response. Children adjusted themselves and accommodated others as they worked towards creative ventures.

Phase I	Phase II	Phase III	Phase IV
◆Children were more competitive than cooperative.	◆Group activities helped instill a feeling of belongingness.	◆Children were very supportive towards others.	◆Children would help and teach their peers if they had a problem in an activity.
◆There were a lot of group conflicts.	◆Derogatory attitude of making fun of others gradually transformed in a supportive attitude.	◆If a child needed something, others came forward to help. “ma’am ye chart paper nahi laye, hum de dein?”*(ma’am she has not brought chart paper, can I give her?).*	◆Shared objects, ideas, stationery, lunch with peers.
◆Often kept complaining, “ma’am ye bat kar rahe hain” *(ma’am they are talking).*	◆Started helping each other.		◆They would realize their mistake and accept it.
◆Were prompt to blame others.		◆Children would sit together in recess and shared food.	◆Apologized if they hurt another child even if inadvertently.
		◆If some one’s bag was left on the floor many children came forward to keep it aside.	

Table 2.*Cooperation: Prominent observations in each phase*

Conclusive Comments

The routine teaching-learning process kills the elements of creativity in children. The teacher child interaction is confined to the school books. The text binds them together yet distances them in all possible ways. The methods of teaching used by the majority of teachers are devoid of any type of challenge. Transmission of information rather than experimentation and exploration characterizes the teaching-learning process in most of the classrooms. Children are not encouraged to question but are only asked to provide answers (Sharma, 2011).

Experiential learning is a crucial component of CD. The basic premise of drama is 'to do' or 'to act'. In CD, the child engages both mind and body in the process. CD acts as a bridge connecting school experience and the real life. Children play, act and create together with their peers not just in isolation. Drama is a social art wherein the participants interact with their co-participants. It engages one or more than one person in it. When participating in CD, children get an opportunity to interact and co-create with their peers leading thus to social participation and assimilation. Drama is typically a social and interpersonal activity.

This study is a pioneering step in the Indian context to introduce CD in the state-run primary classroom and systematically assess it's impact through longitudinal analysis. The passage of two years and six months in which the study was conducted witnessed a remarkable change in the social skills of the participant children. They became a cohesive whole through various social skills that they cultivated in their participation in CD workshops. Children developed empathy, cooperation, trust, freedom to express, communication skills, group interaction. Discipline was improved too. As children take part in CD activities, they improvise in a wide range of situations and identify with a myriad of characters. Children become better equipped to deal with situations, people, relationships not just during the role play situations in CD workshops but also outside the classroom. A child who can see can empathize with a visually impaired child when he/she participates in an activity that involves the visual sense organ. When children feel the space with their eyes closed, or in many other such activities, they get a feeling of what it means being visually impaired. CD takes the children to those unexplored areas of life and make them sensitive towards others in society and towards life in general.

In our intervention the focus of the pedagogic exchange has shifted from rote memory to experiential learning through integrating CD as a mode of teaching. Such a pedagogical approach can lead towards transformation of lived experience for children. Schools are considered temples of knowledge and therefore the challenge for the teachers and the teacher trainers lies in promoting innovative ways for children to gain knowledge not just based on witten texts but meaningful to their own lives. CD has immense potential to enhance the social and cognitive abilities of children using a range of experiential activities. The world needs more humanity, humility, empathy and CD is a

powerful means which can create a better future, a world that has more compassionate and sensitive people.

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Changing the world one verb at a time
Collaborating with teachers in schools in Mexico City

Sylvia London

I have been a collaborative-dialogical practitioner for more than 20 years. My main identity is as a therapist, but I also work as consultant, trainer, supervisor and coach. In 1998 my colleagues and I founded Grupo Campos Eliseos,[1] an independent institute in Mexico City, affiliated to The Houston Galveston Institute in Texas. Since the creation of Grupo Campos Eliseos fifteen years ago, my colleagues and I have shared collaborative and social constructionist ideas in many fields, including training psychotherapists, university faculty and, more recently, teachers, coaches and business consultants. In this chapter I will talk about the ideas that inform our work and will use a short story to illustrate their application in schools.

Our Philosophical Stance

Following Harlene Anderson's ideas, (1997, 2007) our collaborative approach to education is based on a collection of practical philosophical assumptions.This patchwork includes pieces of postmodern and contemporary hermeneutic philosophies, social construction and dialogue theories.These assumptions provide an alternative language that, in turn, provide a particular orientation to educational practices in which students are actively and intimately engaged in their learning and have a voice in determining and evaluating the what and how of it. Inspired in Anderson's ideas (1997) and adapted to the work in schools, the question that leads the design of my work is :

> *How can profesionals create the type of relationships and conversations that invite all the paticipants in the educational community to access and put into practice their resources, strengths and creativity in order to generate together possibilities, where none seemed to exist before?*

Our aim is to create a collaborative learning community (Anderson, 1998, 2000, in press; Anderson & Swim, 1993, 1995; Fernandez, London & Rodriguez, 2006) where all membres are included, valued and appreciated; a space where there is room for all voices and where all feel a sense of commitment and belonging. In this community, we

[1] Grupo Campos Eliseos founders are Elena Fernandez, Margarita Tarragona and Sylvia London; Irma Rodriguez directs the Grupo Campos Eliseos Clinic at La Casa de los Niños de Palo Solo, IAP.

invite participants to acces their sense of hope, care and concern for themselves and their fellow human beings.

My interest in working in schools

For many years the main focus of my work has been clinical. As a psychotherapist, I have spent most of my time in my office working with individuals and families. Given the fact that I have worked with children and have had close connections with schools, families who were concerned about bullying incidents in schools began seeking my consultation. Working with children who have been identified as victims and their families was facilitated by the fact that there was an identified problem. In addition, both children and parents were motivated to look for help in aleviating the pain of bullying and to develop relational strategies for survival in the school arena. On the other hand, I have also worked with the children identified as "bullies." In these cases, the work was more challenging. Most often, the referrals were mandated by the school following a violent incident. There was very little motivation on the part of the child or the family to change, and in these instances the work in my office was almost useless. Reflecting upon these clinical experiences, and based on our years of experience as collaborative practitioners and University faculty, we realized that in order to be effective in fostering change, the work had to take place within the school system, creating collaborative learning communities where we could include students, teachers, parents and school personnel. In this chapter I will share an example of the work we are currently doing in schools.

The story[2]

As part of the School Consultation Team at Grupo Campos Eliseos,[3] I received a phone call from a school psychologist who had been a student in one of our workshops. She worked in a large private school and was requesting a conference on bullying for parents of children attending their grammar school. In order to make a decision regarding her request, I asked her if the teachers and school personnel had information regarding bullying, especially ways to deal with the phenomena in their classrooms. I also asked her what the school policies regarding bullying incidents were. She told me that the school personnel knew very little about bullying and that the school had not developed policies yet. She said that the school was interested in offering a conference for the parents as the

[2] A different version of this case appears in London, S. (2104) Udvikling af et skolefaelleskab baseret pa anerkendesele og styrker, Fortaelling fra Sylvia London, ekstern skoleudvilingskonsulent i Mexico in Haslebo, G & Emmerstend Lund, G., *Relationsudvikling i skolen, Relationel Pedagogik*, Denmark.

[3] Marifer Benanbib and Sylvia London are members of The School Consultation Team at Grupo Campos Eliseos.

first step. Her request worried me and I told her that I did not think it was a good idea to gather the parents and talk to them about bullying before the teachers had some training regarding the phenomena. In my experience, at the end of the conference the parents were going to ask the school at large, and the teachers in particular, questions like: What are you doing in your school and in your classroom to address the problem? or, My son or daughter has been bullied in your school for the last year, what are you doing about it, how are you going to help her? I finished the call telling the school psychologist that I could not give the lecture, but would be happy to meet with her and the school Principal to talk about the school and their needs. A few months later, they called me again and said, "After we talked to you a few months ago, we went ahead and scheduled the conference for parents, can you please come and talk to us?" By then, the school had created a complicated relationship with the parents and were asking for help.

The Relationship

We scheduled a meeting and asked the school psychologist to invite the school personnel who had influence in the design of the school environment and the implementation of school discipline. We met with the Principal, the psychologists and the two main vice-principals. After initial introductions and greetings, we asked the following questions:

What do you think will be important for us to know about your school?

What would you like to know about us and our work?

We had an interesting conversation regarding the school, its special challenges and characteristics. We also talked about our approach to school consultation in general and bullying in particular. The Principal and his staff were concerned about the school environment, the bullying incidents and the lack of abilities and information the teachers had in dealing with these situations. They were also interested in providing their teachers with specific training to develop classroom management skills and interventions. As consultants we had the following challenge:

How can we address the school demands regarding intervention and techniques for handling bullying situations and, at the same time, honor our philosophical stance where our focus is on developing relationships and conversations that foster alternative ways of listening and speaking among all the members of the school community?

Having this challenge in mind, we proposed a training program for teachers and school personnel using a combination of ideas from traditional theories of bullying, positive psychology, solution focused therapy and appreciative inquiry, all under the umbrella of collaborative practices.

Our guiding question, inspired by Harlene Anderson (1997) was:

How can professionals create the kind of conversations and relationships that invite all the participants in the educational community (teachers, parents, students and all school personnel) into a mutual appreciation where every person can access and use his/her

strengths, resources and creativity to develop possibilities where none seem to exist before?

Following our philosophical stance, our main goal as consultants was to create a collaborative learning community (Anderson, 1998); a space where all members of the school felt connected and had a sense of belonging. This included teachers, administrators and other school personnel, especially those who work with students on a daily basis. The questions that directed our work during this initial phase were inspired by the words of Norwegian psychiatrist, Tom Andersen (1995), *Who do you talk with? When? Where ? and About what?*

I offer this long and detailed description of the creation of the relationship with the school because in our experience the most important part of the work as a consultant is done in this initial phase. The way you begin, how you meet and greet people, opens possibilities to create the framework for a collaborative process and design that includes the voices of all the important stakeholders and the philosophy and values of the institution, as well as those of the consultants.

The Creation of the Consultation Project: One conversation leads to the next

Following our philosophical stance, where one conversation leads to another, this first meeting with the principals, where we talked about their needs and our philosophical stance, led to an initial proposal that included a year-long consultation process for the school personnel. In converation with the school administrators and psychologists, the program was tailored to the schools needs, schedule and budget. The program began with a two-day retreat that included teachers and school administrators.

Preparing the stage

In order to create a collaborative learning community and introduce the ideas and the culture of hope and care, we began our training program with a two-day intensive retreat at the beginning of the school year. All the teachers in the Grammar school were invited to participate. Each teacher received a letter of invitation that included a description of the workshop. The letter also invited the teachers to take the VIA Signature Strength Questionnaire online (www.authentichappiness.com) and bring to the opening workshop the results of the test. Taking a questionnaire that emphasizes individual strengths fostered the teachers´ curiosity and provided an unusual framework to look at their own resources; this became the first step to look at the strengths and resources available in the school and in the classroom.

Conversations and Relationships that make a difference

We were confronted with the challenge of addressing the school request of offering teachers a training on bullying prevention and intervention, while honoring our belief that the change in a school environment is possible only when there is a community that values participants, giving them a voice. We decided to follow Gregory

Bateson's (1972) idea from the familiar to the newnessand begin the creation of the learning community with an exercise. We invited all participants to voice the meaning of the word "bullying."

The guiding question for the exercise was:

When you hear the word bullying, what are the ideas, memories and images that come to mind?

I(we) asked them to Please write them on a piece of paper and then share them with their neighbors.The exercise provided the participants the opportunity to reflect upon their personal history with the word and their personal experiences through words and images. Participants first reflected individually and then in small groups. As the groups started to exchange ideas, there was an atmosphere of care and curiosity in listening and sharing personal stories. After twenty minutes we asked the different small groups to share some stories and then share the experience of talking about the subject. Finally, we gathered, from the stories, some definitions of the word bullying and how it affects experiences in human interactions in general and for teachers in particular. The group as a whole was very engaged in the activity; personal stories were shared and, with the stories, feelings of care and compassion were in the air. At the end of the exercise we offer a formal definition of bullying that included all the elements that the group of teachers had already offered. In this exercise, teachers realised how much they already knew about bullying in theory and in experience. They were able to create their own definition that included all the elements of the formal definition and were able to exchange ideas as a collaborative learning community. At the end of the exercises we asked each group to formulate some specific questions about what they wanted to know regarding bullying for prevention and intervention. This exercise at the beginnig of the retreat created an atmosphere of belonging and connection to the training program. Our theoretical presentations and information regarding bullying were tailored to the group curiosities and interests. At the same time, we were able as facilitators to have information about the group that helped us design together the contents and processes for the year. Also, the teachers reported feeling engaged and interested. Building on the theory of bullying , we began to use the slogan, "We are ok, if everybody is ok,"(London, 2014) inviting teachers to pay attention first to themselves, their relationship with their colleagues, the institution and their students. Our intention was to create a community that moves from "indifference to commitment."

After sharing information regarding bullying as a social and community phenomena (London & Benabib, 2013), we were ready to invite the teachers to work in pairs using the information and experience they had while taking the VIA signature strengths questionnaire. The exercise was organized using the following instructions created by Pawelski(2007).

In pairs , please take turns as speaker and listener.

The speaker:

Share with your partner a situation in your life where you were able to use your personal strengths. Describe the situation with as much detail as you can. Help the listener experience with you the nature of the situation.

The listener:

Listen carefully without asking questions or interrupting the flow of the story. At the end of the story, make comments and questions that help the speaker savor his or her story.

At the end, take some time to talk about each other's strengths and the way they were used in your personal story and exchange ideas regarding the overall experience of speaking and listening.

The groups came back together and shared their stories and experiences with the whole group. They commented that this exercise was very useful and at the same time very challenging because they were not used to talking about their strengths; they said they had a hard time bragging about what they do well in their life. On the other hand, they were already thinking about ways they could use similar experiences with their students in their classroom.

While the teachers were engaged in their paired exercises, we compiled the strengths of the group. We talked about the type of organizations they create together and to which they belong. We also talked about other ways they can use the information regarding individual and group strengths to create working teams and peer consultation groups. This exercise highlights the principle that the richness of an organization depends on the collective strengths of the individuals that form it, as well as the capacity to value those strengths and use them as needed by the organization. Teachers were very surprised with the results and at the same time excited about the possibilities. After the exercise, we shared some ideas from the research in positive psychology (Seligman, 2002, London, 2012) regarding ways to use strengths as resources in the organizations.

Strengths and resources in action: Using Exceptions and Numerical Scales

We invite teachers to take the VIA Signature Strength Questionnaire before the workshop to help them develop a framework that focuses on strenghts. The opening exercise highlights the difficulty of looking at strenghts in a culture of deficit. Thus, we assumed that by looking at their own strengths, sharing them and listening to their colleagues strengths, we could prepare teachers to look at their students' resources.

Ideas from Solution Focus Therapy (O'Hanlon & Weiner Davis, 1990), based on exceptions to the problem and the use of numerical scales, helped teachers develop counter-cultural ideas towards problematic behaviors.

The principles that guide Solution Focused Therapy include:

- People, (teachers, parents and students) have resources to solve their problems.

- Change is constant and inevitable. The work of the teacher is to identify and amplify change.
- In most cases it is not necessary to know too much about a problem to solve it.
- It is not necessary to know the origin or the function of the problem in order to solve it.
- Only a small change is needed. Change in one part of the system can foster change in other parts of the system.
- People define their own objectives and goals.
- Change can be fast.
- There is no one way to see the problem. Different points of view can be equally valid.
- Pay attention to what is possible and changeable and not to what is impossible and unchangeable.

Exceptions and scales

The principles above mentioned allowed us to look for exceptions to the problematic behaviors and to help teachers look for strengths and talents. Searching for exceptions, especially in situations where a teacher has a very hard time with a student's behavior, becomes an interesting tool that allows the teacher to relate to a particular student in a different fashion.

Some ideas to look for exceptions include:

- Look for a situation where the problem doesn´t exist.
- Look for a succesful situation.
- Look for a description that is less problematic.
- Think about a fun situation.
- Think about a situation where the problem is not as relevant.

These are some questions to ask when looking for exceptions:

- Was there a time when Fred behaved better in the classroom?
- What happened on that ocassion?
- What did Fred do?
- What did you do?
- What did the classmates do?
- What did the parents do?

- Who else noticed it?

Using scales

Numerical scales offer a concrete and easy way to assess and predict change. They are also a common practice for teachers in the assesment of children´s performance in the classroom. Numerical scales provide the following benefits:

- A precise, objective, simple and concrete description of the problem
- A Base line and common language
- A tool to asses, compare and predict the behavior
- Self observation and evaluation
- Simple and concrete ways to report

Using scales becomes an interesting way to talk about exceptions to the problem and a concrete way to measure and predict change. You could ask your student, “On a scale from 1 to 10, where10 is the best behavior you can achieve, where do you think you are today?” The student could say, “5” for example, and the teacher could ask, “What makes you think you are on a 5?” The student could mention the behaviors he exhibited that makes him think about a five. The teacher could say, “I would have said 6,” and could mentioned the behavior he saw in the student that day. Then they can have a conversation about the difference in the perception and the assesment, before asking the student something like, “Which number would you like to give yourself tomorrow at the end of the day and what are the behaviors you think you need to have in order to get that number?” This is an example of how including numbers in the conversation provides possibilities to look at the behavor and includes a process of evaluation, self-evaluation, and comparisons for the teacher and the students. It also includes the possibility of control and self-regulation. On the other hand, the numbers allow us to aspire to small changes as well as big changes and keep the conversation open as we assess the change connected to specific behaviors.

Consultation and exercises

Once we shared the ideas regarding exceptions and scales with the group, and before we asked them to engage in an exercise to put these ideas into practice, we asked for a volunteer who would be interested in having a consultation regarding a difficult situation in his/her classroom. A brief conversation/consultation with a teacher provided the opportunity to demonstrate the use of exceptions, illustrate questions regarding exceptions, and the use of scales to invite teachers to experience a different way to think about the student and the problems.

We invited teachers to form groups of three and engage in the following exercise taking turns as interviewer, interviewee and observer:

> *Think about a student you have had difficulties relating to in the last few weeks. Look at the exception and scaling questions and, in pairs, take turns interviewing your colleague about this difficult situation. The role of the observer is to write the questions, monitor the time and help the interviewee when s/he is not able to ask exception questions or maintain a conversation on the exceptions and instead slips back into questions concerning the problem.*

Teachers were able to have these series of conversations and realised the questions allowed them to have different thoughts and descriptions regarding the situation. By participating in the conversation as interviewer, interviewee and observer, they could look at the process from different angles. The teachers expressed their curiosity and commented that they needed to practice these ideas for a long time in order to feel comfortable with them and use them in their classroom. We asked them to practice the exercise in their classroom and told them that we would provide different conversational and consultation formats to practice within the school year.

Language and the way we use it

Following this model, teachers began to look for exceptions and use numerical scales. We also talked about looking at each situation as unique thus making it easier to identify possibilities for change. An interesting challenge we encountered was the language teachers used to describe their students´ behaviors. We payed special attention to the use of language, inviting teachers to use action verbs. We also encouraged teachers to identify frequency of behaviors rather than using ontological expressions (e.g., the verb "to be") and to avoid the use of perjorative adjectives when talking about the children. For example, if a teacher were to say, "Fred *is* lazy," we encourage him/her to say, "Fred did not do his homework 30 times this month." If a teacher were to say, "Fred *is* lazy," the implication is that Fred cannot be any other way – laziness is a quality of Fred. On the other hand, if Fred did not do his homework 30 times this month, perhaps he can do something different next month. Following the ideas of the Solution Focused Therapy, we also invited the teachers to practice focusing on the positive behaviors (exceptions) Fred might present. For example, "Fred scored two goals in the soccer match," or "Fred helped his classmates solve their relationship problems," or "Fred takes care of his sick mother." This change in language provides a more comprehensive description of Fred and allows teachers (and others) to assess the possibilities for change. If the following month Fred still misses his homework 15 times, having a 50% improvement over the last month, the teacher has the possibility of focusing on the improvement instead of the 15 times Fred missed his homework, thus giving Fred motivation to keep on changing. This message indicates that the teacher is aware of his efforts. We worked with the teachers on a series of exercises where we asked them to think about a challenging situation or challenging student and search for exceptions and

alternative descriptions for their behavior. These exercises took place in groups where different teachers who worked together could provide different and alternative descriptions of the same student and the same situation.

At the end of the retreat, the participants mentioned that these ideas were useful to be considered not only in the classroom but in all relationships and contexts. We shared with the teachers a slogan that was created in another school, “Let’s change the world, one verb at a time.” In that school, teachers decided that they needed to practice different ways of speaking and different ways of listening. In order to do so, they had the idea to create “The language squad,” where teachers could ask each other to pay attention to their language and every time they heard a fellow teacher use the verb “to be” they would ask, “Can you say it in a different way?” or “Can you focus on the specific behaviors that make you describe the student that way?” The teachers liked the idea and decided to create the “Let’s change the world one verb at a time” banner for the teachers’ lounge.

The Next Step

During the retreat teachers commented that the ideas they were learning seemed to be useful, although, difficult to put into practice. They requested ongoing consultation and coaching. Based on our experience and conversations with the school administration team, we decided collaboratively that the next step in the consultation process would be to provide monthly consultation in small groups divided by grade. The conversational spaces were designed to provide the opportunity for hands-on consultation and the development of collaborative learning communities where colleagues became resources for each other. This created communities of care and appreciation within each one of the consultation groups. As part of the process, we asked teachers to create a blog for *Best Practices*. In this blog, they were invited to share a description of the challenges they were encountering and the way they solved them. This blog became a space for teachers to share and to consult. In addition to sharing succesful experiences, the blog provided the community of teachers a culture of competence and appreciation as they began to consult for each other. These experiences of appreciation among colleagues invited teachers to look for ways to appreciate strengths and resources in their students.

After the first school semester, we scheduled a conference with parents. We gave a talk about bullying and school relatioships and included some information that came from interviewing teachers and students regarding the situation in their school. By then, teachers and school personnel were familiar with bullying theories and had developed some skills to deal with bullying in the classroom. They were capable of engaging in informed and successful conversations with the parents and could provide answers to their questions and concerns.

Learning from each other: Walking our talk

After working together as a team for ten months, we designed with the teachers a series of activities to celebrate and emphasize the culture of strength and appreciation we had constructed together. We asked the teachers to take one month to observe each one of their students and to answer the following questions by writing the answer on a small index card:

> *What have you learned from each one of your students? And what (specific action or behavior) did the student do that facilitated your learning?*

Teachers said that engaging in this exercise for an entire month helped them to develop a different attitude towards the class. They could see each student as a potential teacher. The exercise helped them appreciate each child as a unique person, as well as to appreciate the relationship they had with each other. The teachers created a poster with these cards and brought it to the classroom to share with the students. They also gave each student the card that was specifically about that student's behavior, saying outloud and in front of the group the description of the learning and thanked the student for what s/he had taught them along the school year.

In order to strengthen the community of teachers as well as the spirit of appreciation among them, we created a "Certificate of Appreciation" signed by fellow teachers. On these certificates, teachers singled out characteristics they appreciated in each other and described how they showed up in specific actions and behaviors. They also commented on what they valued about each person. These Certificates were read out loud and handed out at the End of the Year Celebration in front of the whole staff, creating a spirit of recognition and appreciation.

Last, but not least, given the fact that it was the end of the school year, we asked each teacher to write a letter to the person who would be the class's teacher the following year. In this letter, we asked the teacher to tell next year's teacher the achievements of the year, the way they had accomplished them and his or her dreams and wishes for the following academic year. Teachers said that this exercise gave them the opportunity to reflect upon their practice, value their own work, and put their wishes in words.

This work was very succesful and exciting in terms of assessing the impact on the school personnel and school moral. Teachers commented that it was difficult to keep this work on an ongoing basis because it goes against the culture and requires a constant reminder to stay away from the culture of deficit and despair that is prevalent in the school systems. They commented that having the best practice blog was a good way to share resources and decided to implement the idea of the language squad to keep on changing the world one verb at a time.

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Practicing Relational Thinking in Dealing with Bullying in Schools

Gitte Haslebo and Gro Emmertsen Lund

A typical school day rarely consists only of focused learning and harmonious interactions between teacher and students and among the students. It also includes fun, good-natured teasing, unexpected events, disagreements, tension and conflict. Sometimes, the fun stops for students who are teased; tensions arise as several students may gang up to persecute or exclude one particular student. This student feels ridiculed, beaten, hurt, excluded and unhappy. Teachers and others may observe this behaviour and wish to do something about it. Yet, most of the time it is hard for an adult to understand what the children are up to, and one's immediate inclination is to intervene to put an end to the aggressive or marginalising behaviour. But how? That is the big question. The problem has been given the label: 'bullying' – and it occupies an important place in current discussions among school professionals and educational researchers, as well as within public debate.

In this article, we open with a case study about a teaching team trying to put an end to the bullying of a student. This is a familiar course of events, where the teachers' understanding and actions are driven by an individualist way of thinking. What this implies in regard to bullying will be explained in the form of five important assumptions. The notion that bullying is something to be fought and stamped out is based on a long tradition characterised by the use of prohibition, punishment and isolation of bullies – actions that rarely have the desired effects.

Next, we present an alternative set of assumptions about bullying that springs from a relational way of thinking. This approach enables other and far more promising practices for school professionals. The key here is that 'bullying' can be understood as one of several ways of dealing with events – and talking about them. Co-creating 'bullying' as the plot in a story about a particular student affects the actions of the persons involved. The first step in making something better happen, therefore, is to notice when a bullying story is in the making. The article outlines several tools to help school professionals become aware how a bullying story is co-created – and how they can help reframe it.

But what to do if the bullying has become an ingrained part of events, that affect a particular student for a prolonged time? To answer that question, we offer an example of

a narrative method that can be used to change the course of events. It is called the *undercover anti-bullying team*.

It would be ideal, however, if the culture of the school and the class were resilient to bullying. The final part of the chapter describes how an appreciative method – *the wellbeing class meeting* - can be used to develop helpful relationships, mutual recognition and a shared responsibility for what happens.

Fighting Bullying: The Individualist Perspective

Let us begin by considering the story of Andrew in 5th grade.

Case 1. Andrew, who was called a 'slimy creep'– a story from a teaching team

One late afternoon, Andrew's teacher calls Andrew's parents. He reaches Andrew's mother and tells her the following:

> '*I am calling to reassure you that we are taking care of the problems. Several teachers have noticed that Andrew is being teased and ostracized. The other students say nasty things to him. They call him 'fat faggot' and 'slimy creep' and things like that. I've told the kids not to use that sort of language, but they say that these are accurate descriptions of Andrew. Yesterday, they took his lunch box and tossed it around just before the lunch break. His food was all smashed up, so he didn't have any lunch. Andrew probably told you about that. When the students do group work, no one wants to be in a group with Andrew, so he often works on his own'.*
>
> *I spoke with Andrew about it today, and he said that he doesn't care, because he's used to it. We think he does care. He also told me that they write nasty things to him and about him on Facebook and Skype. The lead bullies are Jack, Eric, Luke and Randy. We haven't been able to determine why they do it. I have now written the four boys' parents and asked them to step up and explain to the boys how wrong this is.*
>
> *I just wanted to let you know that we are aware of the bullying and that we will hit back if it happens again. The school has an anti-bullying policy in place, and we do not tolerate bullying. Maybe you could also talk to Andrew about getting better at setting boundaries for others?*'

What key questions should we ask when we hear or read this kind of story? There are many possible questions: Why are the four boys so mean? Why does Andrew fail to stand up to them? Why have the parents not raised their children better? Why are the teachers failing to stop the bullying? All these questions are based on the assumption that solving a problem requires first knowing the causes and preferably determining who is at fault: the four boys? Andrew? his parents or teachers? In these questions, the focus is on the individual and concerns personal qualities and intentions. There is a high likelihood that these 'why' questions promote an individualist way of thinking and thus suggest and invite certain actions.

The individualist way of understanding also contains certain assumptions about bullying. We will now bring these assumptions to light and put them into words to make

it possible to consider their usefulness. The assumptions concern both what bullying 'is' and how best to combat it. The five key assumptions are the following:

1. Bullying is done by students with the intention of hurting someone
2. The causes of bullying are to be found in the bully's personal flaws (for example poor empathy) and low morals
3. The causes, why some students become the victims of bullying are to be found in their personal flaws (for example low self-esteem, difficulty setting boundaries to others, etc.)
4. School professionals need to be able to read the bullies' intentions and stop them by isolating or punishing them or making them acknowledge their guilt
5. School professionals need to be able to spot the personal characteristics of students who are bullied or who are at risk of being bullied. They need to be isolated (from the bully), protected and affirmed in their understanding that it is the bully's behaviour that is wrong.

How are these assumptions represented in the case study? It is not directly evident from the story whether the teaching team believes that the four boys intend to hurt Andrew (Assumption 1). On the other hand, there is also no indication that the teaching team is considering other ways of understanding the four boys' behaviour than 'bullying'.

The teacher's request that the four boys' parents explain the boys that their actions are wrong suggests that the teaching team explains the boys' actions by personal flaws or deficient morals (Assumption 2). At the end of the story, the teacher similarly encourages Andrew's parents to help Andrew fix something about himself: He is not good enough at setting boundaries with others (Assumption 3).

An extension of these assumptions is that it is the school's responsibility to stop the bullies, which the teacher in the story attempts to do by banning the bad language and by promising to 'hit back' if it happens again. What 'hitting back' in fact involves is not stated explicitly, but the punishment discourse is clearly in play (Assumption 4). It is also represented as the school's responsibility to protect the victim, Andrew, who – as the teacher explains – probably does mind the way he is being treated, despite his claims of indifference (Assumption 5).

The teachers in this team are not alone in this understanding of bullying and how to deal with it. It is a widespread understanding in Western culture in general, in research, in the public debate and in many schools. Many Danish municipalities have 'bullying policies' or 'anti-bullying policies' declaring a zero-tolerance stance towards bullying, which are based on the five assumptions outlined above. Thus, the teachers in this team are simply doing their best, based on what they have learned in the prevailing culture at school and in society at large. The team may have had no opportunity to encounter alternative understandings in their training. Nevertheless, there are alternative ways of thinking. We will return to these alternative views after a brief look at the history of 'bullying'.

Bullying in Historical Perspective

The concept of bullying is relatively new, and it is only in the past 10-15 years that Danish society and Danish schools have begun to focus on the specific problems of the sort of disharmonious interactions that is labelled 'bullying'. Research, however, predates this. Perhaps best known is Dan Olweus' studies of bullying in the late 1960s and early 1970s in Sweden and Norway. His best-known book is *Bullying at school: What we know and what we can do*, which was published in Swedish in 1986, in Norwegian in 1992, in English in 1993 and in Danish in 2000. Olweus describes how bullying research began in Scandinavian and spread from here to other countries, including Japan, the United Kingdom, the United States and Australia (Olweus, 1993).

Olweus conducted extensive surveys of bullying in all Norwegian primary and lower secondary schools and in three Swedish towns and developed a highly individually focused understanding of bullying. He asked, 'Why does bullying occur?' and sought the answer to this question in the personal characteristics of the bully and the victim. Therefore, he strove to draw a picture of the typical bully and of the typical victim. In his description, the typical bully is characterised by an aggressive reaction pattern, a positive attitude towards violence and limited compassion with the victim. In addition, the bully is often highly impulsive and has a positive self-perception. If the bully is a boy, he is often physically stronger than his peers – especially the victim. The typical victim, on the other hand, is more anxious, cautious, sensitive and quiet. This applies to both boys and girls. The victims often see themselves as a failure and feel stupid, and they generally have a negative view of themselves (Olweus, D., 1993). Unfortunately, this understanding, which promotes a very narrow focus on individuals and the need to punish them (bullies) or protect them (victims), has become very widespread both in research and in everyday life in many schools. A review of the international scientific literature shows that three out of five articles about bullying is rooted in this understanding (Schott, 2009).

When the individualist understanding is applied to the phenomenon of bullying, it becomes necessary to distinguish between bullies, victims and onlookers. Each of these categories comes with its own set of personal characteristics and should be treated differently, as outlined in the five assumptions we described in relation to Andrew's case.

This categorisation into personality types or roles is also found in several studies in Denmark in recent years. For example in the 2008 study from the Danish National Council for Children, which divided the children into three categories: bullies, victims of bullying and onlookers. The themes in the survey and the questions it asked are influenced by Helle Rabøl Hansen's work, which is also widely referenced in the report. Helle Rabøl Hansen worked at the council from 2000 to 2004 and is the author of the book *Grundbog mod mobning* [Anti-bullying primer] (Hansen, 2005).

Remarkably, the study did not find a fixed pattern where the children either take on one of the three roles in relation to bullying or are completely outside. Some children

may bully others in some situations and be bullied in others. Common characteristics of the students who take on the three bullying roles are that they are less happy about going to school, feel less of a sense of community in the class and are less tolerant of differences. This also applies to the onlookers. There is therefore a major risk that bullying in a class will have a negative impact on everyone.

The study found overwhelming agreement among the students that bullying is not okay, as 90% agreed that all forms of bullying are wrong. When asked who they would speak to if they experienced problems with bullying and were upset (and were only allowed to choose one option), 49% mentioned parents, 37% friends, and only 4% mentioned teachers. The students were also asked whether they would know what to do in a bullying situation. 29% of the bullying victims did not know what to do, while the same was true of 27% of the onlookers. Apparently, the bullies were not asked what they might do.

These findings paint a different picture, which does not conform to the individualist way of understanding bullying. If the same children may switch among the three roles, then personal characteristics cannot be the only explanation. If most students find bullying unacceptable, maybe the 'bullies' are not driven by an intention of hurting others; instead it may be that the 'bullying behaviour' is somehow promoted by the school culture.

Helle Rabøl Hansen has continued to explore this understanding, which attributes greater importance to school and class culture, in her cross-disciplinary research project eXbus: *Exploring Bullying in School* at Aarhus University, Department of Education. The project began in 2007 with funding from TrygFonden. The eXbus project, which is headed by Professor Dorthe Marie Søndergaard, is based on extensive empirical studies including interviews with the various actors in school, observations in schools, clubs and meetings with parents, surveys, written material etc. (Kofoed & Søndergaard, 2009).

In the project, the individualist understanding is replaced with a focus on social processes in school. In relation to bullying, it is crucial whether the actors in the school '*rely on a guilt-focused approach that makes both children and adults search for a culpable aggressor and a powerless victim, or whether they apply an approach that focuses on social processes…'* (Kofoed & Søndergaard, 2009, s. 9.). EXbus takes the latter approach, based on the argument that looking for individual causes of bullying produces far too narrow a perspective.

Thus, the eXbus research project takes an important step from individual psychology to social psychology and strives to include a wide range of factors that may promote bullying. As examples of these factors the project mentions communications technologies (e.g. mobile phones and chat sites), violent entertainment, the physical layout of schools and classrooms, the children's family background, the teachers' communication, class history, school culture etc., all of which may interact in ways that promote bullying. The researcher underscores the high degree of complexity:

> *We need to understand the social dynamics in the classroom with a higher degree of complexity than simply identifying an aggressor and a victim. One way of doing this is to inquire about these factors and to study the mechanisms they create.* (Søndergaard, 2009, p. 22).

Thus, the aim of the research project is to discover new and broader understandings and explanations of bullying.

The eXbus research project underscores that the individualist understanding leads to the implementation of sanctions that have *no* documented positive effect. The use of sanctions is based on the idea that bullying is done by children in fixed roles, but as mentioned above, that is often not the case. The same children may switch in and out of the role as bully and victim over time. To quote Dorte Marie Søndergaard:

> *Instead of asking, "What is wrong with that boy, with that girl?" the idea is to ask, "Why is it necessary for these children to do what they do – what is it that makes these kinds of behaviours and understandings meaningful in their context?" If we move in that direction, the generation of ideas in relation to intervention forms will also lead to other options than the ones we find in extension of the individualising thinking technology*. (Søndergaard, 2009, p. 58).

The main purpose of the research project, however, is to understand and explain – preferrably in ways that offer new perspectives. There is less of an emphasis on developing and trying out new intervention forms. The project indicates a direction that revolves around relationships, culture and community-building didactics. The latter is a new concept, which suggests that the communication in the classroom is of great importance. Teaching can be carried out in ways that are more or less community building and thus more or less conducive to bullying.

To move in a more community-building direction, however, we need a radical shift in our ways of thinking. The very notion that bullying should be fought and, hopefully, eradicated by means of certain 'intervention forms' may be part of the problem rather than part of the solution. From a social constructionist perspective, it is crucial to focus more on what we want to create than what we need to eliminate and eradicate. In extension of this idea, we need to take an in-depth look at the language, communication and processes that may promote this effort.

To help build relationships, culture and community, we believe that we need a social constructionist perspective, including systemic, appreciative and narrative approaches aimed at reshaping and preventing bullying patterns. What this may look like in practice is the topic of the rest of this chapter.

'Bullying' in a Relational Frame

In the past ten years, there has been growing interest in many countries in finding ways to approach 'bullying' within a social constructionist framework, for example in New Zealand (Williams, 2010) and the United States (Winslade & Monk, 2007). We put 'bullying' in inverted commas here to reflect the social constructionist notion that the

words we choose to describe events, behaviours, people etc. is a human choice. A given act cannot in itself be defined as 'bullying' outside a given culture, context and set of relationships. The meaning that is ascribed to the act is co-created by the involved parties. The workings of this co-creative process is unfolded with the application of useful concepts in the book *Making social worlds. A communication perspective* by the late W. Barnett Pearce, who was a professor of communication (Pearce, 2007). When we worked with him, he told us the following story:

Case 2. 'Please insult me!' – a story by W. Barnett Pearce

> *When I teach communication psychology I sometimes ask my students, if they would take part in a little experiment. When I ask them, they always say yes. I thank them and then instruct them to insult me. This always leads to a certain sense of astonishment, but then the boldest of them takes up the challenge and says something like, "You're a lousy teacher. You often turn your back on the class." I thank the person for pointing this out and encourage them to offer the next insult. Gradually, the statements become increasingly offensive, to their amusement – and my own. I acknowledge their effort by saying something like, "Ouch, that was a good one. Very creative. Spot on." After a while I declare the experiment over and ask whether they think they managed to insult me. No, they failed. Why? Some of them say that it had to do with the way I reacted. I came up with all these ways to parry their comments and neither looked upset nor stormed out of the room.*
>
> *It is an important point that the students made here: What happens* after *an act helps attribute meaning to the act. But there is another point that is harder for the students to identify, and that has to do with the context and the relationship that I created from the outset.*
>
> *The context is characterised by our shared project of learning about communication psychology, which means that everything that happens is classified according to this* shared learning objective. *The relationship is characterised as a* helping relationship. *I asked them to help me as a teacher; they accepted and contributed with dedication and creativity. Is an insult possible in the context of a shared learning objective and a helping relationship? No, that is difficult to imagine.'*

We will never forget this story. It is incredibly thought-provoking – also in relation to 'bullying'. It highlights two important focus areas for school professionals. First, the key importance of building contexts that are characterised by shared learning objectives and helping relationships both between teacher and students and among the students. In this constructive context, potentially offensive statements ('bullying') are less likely, as both the teacher and the students are focusing on something *bigger* than themselves (learning about communication). Second, the key importance – if potentially offensive statements are made – of finding ways to reframe their meaning.

The first focus area is about *preventing* 'bullying', while the second is about *reframing* events, acts and the positioning of the persons involved. In the remainder of this chapter we will demonstrate how school professionals can approach both focus areas in practice.

One of the main contributors to the relational approach to 'bullying' is Marie-Nathalie Beaudoin, who is a training director at Bay Area Family Therapy Training Associates. Together with Maureen Taylor, who is a teacher and a writer, she co-authored the internationally acclaimed book *Responding to the culture of bullying and disrespect: New perspectives on collaboration, compassion and responsibility*. The book is based on research, consultancy work and therapy in a wide range of schools in the United States (Beaudoin & Taylor, 2009).

The authors base their work on the positive assumption that teachers are committed and dedicated in their work and do their very best to discover how they can best help students – especially those struggling with problems. Similarly, the authors assume that the students always have sensible and morally good reasons to act as they do – seen from their own perspective and context. Nevertheless, things can go wrong. Bullying and disrespectful behaviour can constitute a major, dominating and unpleasant problem. How does that happen? The authors argue that many of the ways of thinking and values in Western cultures may promote bullying, for example the emphasis on competition, with its tendency to view people as either winners or losers, and on individualism, with its tendency to explain problems and successes based on individual traits and factors. These features are also evident in the school's structure and culture.

The authors describe how this culture prescribes certain dos and don'ts in a given situation. Many of these prescriptions may unintentionally promote bullying. The prescriptions may be so strict that they appear to preclude all but one possible act in a given situation, ruling out all other options. Our cultural training limits what even seems conceivable to us. If a student experiences name-calling, like 'tubby', from a classmate, the targeted student may have been taught not to put up with this sort of abuse but to respond in kind. He or she may reject any proposal of simply ignoring the name-calling, arguing that putting up with abuse will lead to a loss of respect.

Any given culture involves countless prescriptions, which we absorb without really noticing them. Unfortunately, many of these culturally determined prescriptions promote bullying and disrespectful behaviour. A culture consists not only of assumptions and values but also of prescriptions that both children and adults take for granted. The point here is that making the school culture more resistant to bullying requires uncovering and identifying the prescriptions that promote 'bullying' and planning learning processes that allow children and adults to find better ways. This, however, requires a different way of thinking.

What might an alternative to the individualist assumptions about bullying look like, and how might we put them into words? In Figure 1, we present the five assumptions that we reviewed in connection with Case 1 about Andrew, on the left side, while the right side lists some key relational assumptions.

Assumptions in the individualist way of thinking	Assumptions in the relational way of thinking
1. Bullying is done by students aiming to harm others	1. 'Bullying' may be seen as an inappropriate communication pattern, which both students and teachers contribute to – and which can be changed
2. The causes of bullying should be found in deficiencies in the bully's personal characteristics (e.g. poor empathy) and low morals	2. Everyone has good reasons for what they do – seen in light of their particular position, perspective and version of reality
3. The causes, why some students become victims of bullying should be found in deficiencies in their personal characteristics (e.g. low self-esteem, difficulty setting boundaries with others)	3. School professionals need to pay attention to the 'bullying stories' they listen to and tell – and help reframe them into something better
4. School professionals need to be able to read bullies' intentions and stop them by isolating or punishing them or making them acknowledge their guilt	4. School professionals need to be able to create contexts and events that promote the development of helpful communication patterns
5. School professionals need to be able to spot the personal characteristics of students who are being bullied or who are at risk of being bullied. They need to be isolated (from the bully), protected and affirmed in their understanding that it is the bully's behaviour that is wrong	5. School professionals need to use an appreciative language that gives everyone a position with dignity

Figure 1. *Two ways of understanding bullying*

If we apply the relational way of thinking when we listen to the teaching team's story in Case 1 about Andrew, the biggest difference is that we will be listening and relating to the story as one among several possible stories – not as an objective description of reality. We will now take a closer look at the five relational assumptions and consider how they might inspire the teaching team to find other approaches to the problems.

The *first* assumption is to see the phenomenon of 'bullying' as an inappropriate communication pattern that both students and teachers contribute to and which can be changed. It may seem provoking to claim that a teaching team, with the best intentions of helping their students, may actually contribute to an inappropriate and undesirable communication pattern. Nevertheless, this assumption may inspire the teaching team to

discuss the potential role of their own actions. To what extent, for example, might prohibitions and 'stop signs' perpetuate a pattern of bullying, based on the idea that some children experience them as incomprehensible or unjust? Perhaps talking with individual children and calling their parents might be replaced by something else? The positive message in this assumption is that a communication pattern can be changed in many ways, especially by involving multiple actors in the efforts. One possible approach would be to use the weekly class session to discuss how everyone can contribute to the development of good peer relationships in class. The key here is to seek to generate ideas for actions that break with the inappropriate communication pattern.

The *second* assumption, which is that everyone has good reasons to act the way they do – seen in light of their position, perspective and version of reality – can help the teaching team shift everyone's attention away from the problems with bullying to ideas about what a desirable school day might look like, and what it would take to bring it about. The causal thinking that dominates the left side of Figure 1 may drive the teaching team into the role of investigators who need to identify the main culprits before they can act. However, when the teaching team seeks to think and act based on the alternative relational assumption, it is easier for them to give up trying to determine *why,* and focus instead on *how* the teaching team can put the class on a good path.

The *third* assumption is based on the notion that any story about a series of events is only one possible story among many. When stories about 'bullying incidents' become a bullying story, this story was created by people and can therefore also be reframed by people. This assumption might inspire the teaching team to reconsider whether it is helpful to pass a 'bullying story' on to Andrew's parents. This positions Andrew as a victim of bullying and the other four boys as bullies. How we speak about events is not without consequences. The small change in speaking about children who 'take part in bullying incidents' instead of describing them as either bullies or victims of bullying can make a big difference. The very words 'bully' and 'victim' may stigmatise children and make it difficult for them to escape an undesired role. Both theory and practice have shown that once a 'bullying story' about certain children has taken root and become the accepted 'reality', the adherents of the story find it very difficult to notice exceptions, that is, acts that do not match the individual students' positioning, for example when a 'bully' helps a classmate who has fallen down, or when a 'victim' sets boundaries with others.

The *fourth* assumption takes a proactive stance by enabling a wide range of options for school professionals to stage events. School professionals are not simply 'subjected' to the group of children they have been assigned. They are also co-creators of the children they wind up teaching. Children are not destined to be one way or another, but act differently, depending on context and relationships. The fourth assumption therefore implies that school professionals have a considerable capacity for developing helpful communication patterns by framing contexts and events that invite children to make constructive contributions. Later we present two methods for doing this.

As the previously mentioned authors underscore, children prefer to be nice to each other and are upset when they fail (Beaudoin & Taylor, 2009). As they explain, one of the reasons that children sometimes do fail is that they have not yet learnt to master an appreciative language. It may initially be easier for a child to use abusive language about another child than to verbalise what he or she actually wants from the other child. It is easier to say 'you slimy creep' than to say what one would like the other child to do or not do in a particular situation. It is therefore important that school professionals master appreciative language that is free of stigmatising phrases, thus modelling this behaviour for the children. That is what the *fifth* assumption is about. It facilitates the development of appropriate communication patterns when school professionals use appreciative language that gives everyone a position with dignity.

All five assumptions in the right side of the figure invite school professionals to apply a helicopter perspective. The distance makes it possible to take in more of the landscape and thus also provides more room for manoeuvring. Applying a helicopter perspective also helps the professionals avoid jumping to conclusions. Hasty conclusions about who is right and who is wrong in situations of disharmony are often considered profoundly unfair by the children involved. 'The only way to be fair is to be aware of your thinking, move away from problem stories, understand context, and address the situation in a way that is less blaming of individuals' (Beaudoin & Taylor, 2009, p. 34). In many of the schools we are familiar with, the students' sense of being misunderstood and unfairly treated is often a contributing factor to the inefficacy of prohibitions and sanctions. Instead, the result is an escalation of conflicts between student and teacher and perhaps later between parents and teacher.

The rest of this article will demonstrate how these five assumptions can be brought into play as school professionals seek to identify bullying stories, reframe bullying stories and staging processes aimed at facilitating an appreciative school and classroom culture.

Identifying and Reframing Bullying Stories

A story has certain key characteristics. It is told *by* someone *to* someone. It has a plot, which serves as the backbone of the story, and which presents the incidents in a particular light. In Andrew's case, the story was told to the mother by the teacher on behalf of the teaching team. The story about the 'same' events might sound very different with a different narrator and/or audience. For example, if Jack were telling the story to his big brother, he would probably tell a different story than the one the teacher told to Andrew's mother.

A plot that is about bullying ascribes a certain meaning to events, for example the incident when the boys tossed Andrew's lunch box around. Thus, the plot positions the individuals in the story in a particular way. A bullying plot offers the positions of victim, rascal(s), onlooker(s) and, perhaps, a rescuer. The story positions Andrew as the victim,

the four boys as rascals, the other students (and perhaps the parents) as onlookers, and the teachers as rescuers. Once these positions have been defined and assigned, the individuals are attributed certain 'personal characteristics' – qualities that in fact have more to do with the position than with the person in question. Positioned as rascals, the four boys are seen as mean, and when positioned as a victim, Andrew is seen as weak – so weak, in fact, that he even claims that he does not mind being called a 'slimy creep'. This creates an inappropriate communication pattern, which often develops into a vicious cycle or rather spiral; see Figure 2.

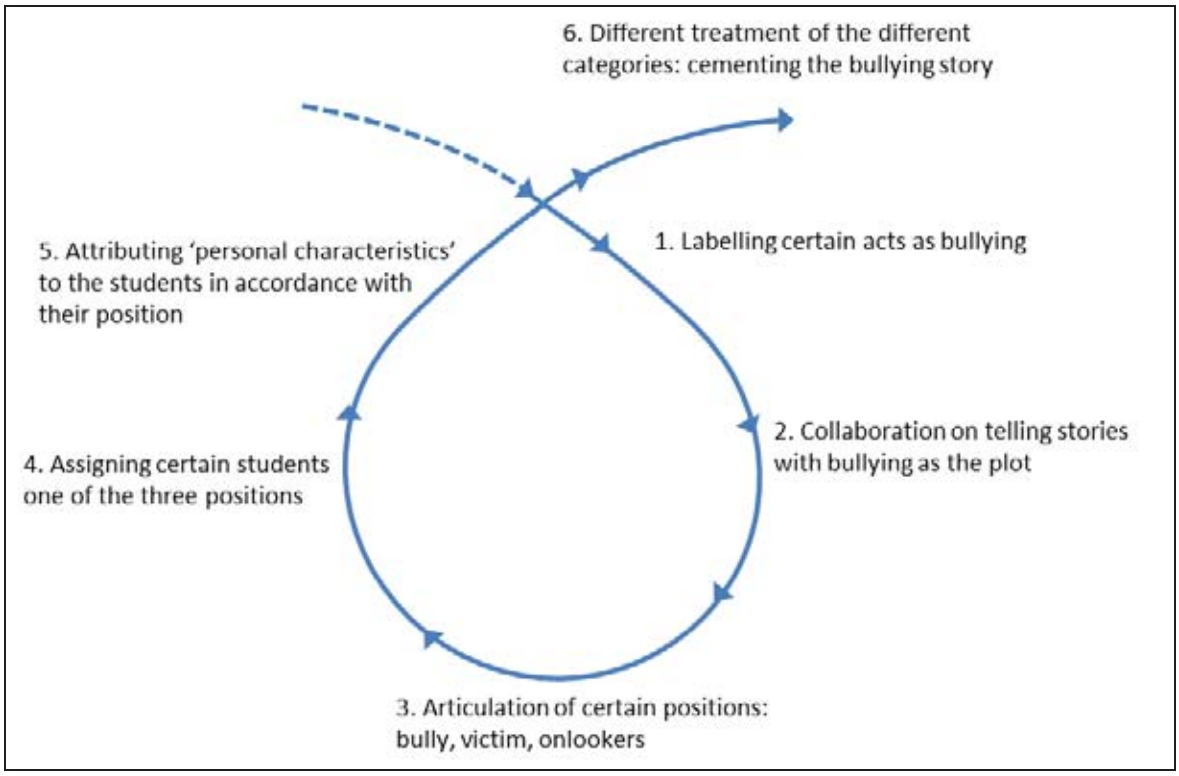

Figure 2. *How a bullying story can become a vicious spiral*

The vicious spiral is initiated when someone 'chooses' to label certain acts bullying (step 1). We have put 'chooses' in inverted commas here, because it is usually not a deliberate choice, where the person is aware that any action can be ascribed different meaning depending on context and perspective. When several persons refer to certain individuals' actions as bullying, they may collaborate on developing stories where bullying is the plot (step 2). Next, the positions associated with the plot are articulated: bully, victim and onlookers (step 3). Following this, there may be an effort to determine which students occupy the various positions (step 4), and then the rascals are attributed the 'personal characteristics' that rascals are assumed to have (step 5). This makes reality even more divided than it was, because the plot of the story makes it seem completely reasonable for school professionals to treat the persons differently: The bully needs to be punished, and the victim needs to be protected (step 6). The bullying story is further

entrenched and may be perpetuated, as new bullying incidents are absorbed into the story (step 6).

To minimise or reframe the bullying, someone has to do something to disrupt the vicious spiral. Step one is to realise how telling about specific events become part of a bullying story. How is a story about bullying co-created? This is illustrated in Figure 3.

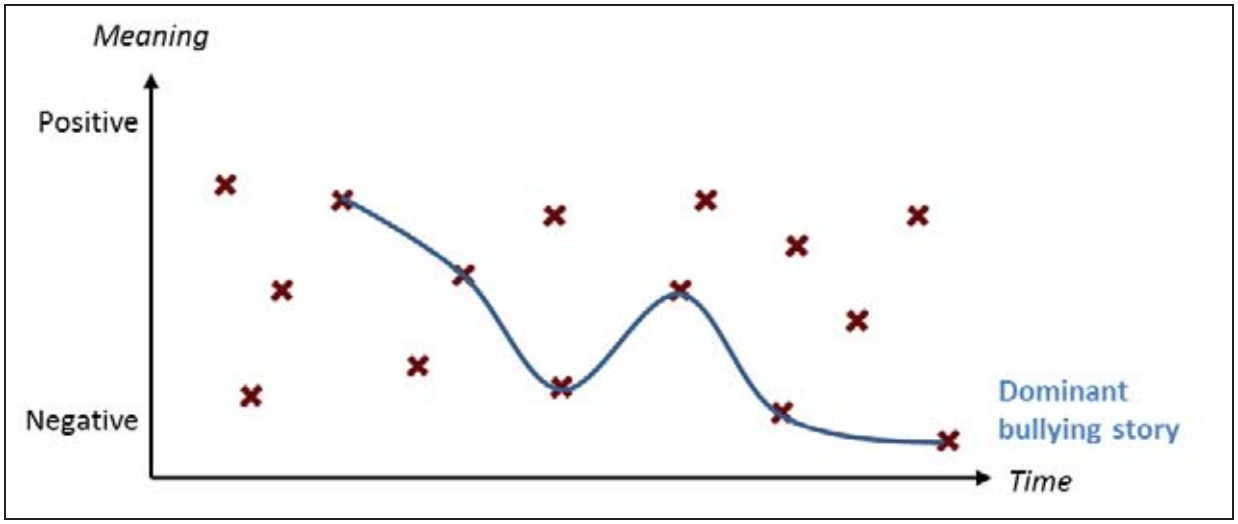

Figure 3. *Co-creating a bullying story*[1]

A bullying story develops when actors in the school choose to focus on some events rather than others. In the figure, each X marks an incident or an act. The selected incidents are linked together in a story that develops over time. In Figure 3 we see a story where the incidents are increasingly negative, and conditions worsen. A bullying story will dominate other understandings of events.

As the illustration shows, however, there are many Xs that are not included in the story. Some of these incidents might be given a more prominent position. A step on the path to reframing a bullying story is to change the language to make it less positioning. Beaudoin & Taylor, who were mentioned above, speak in very open and vague terms about ‘students who struggle with bullying.’ This phrasing avoids positioning children in specific roles. The tiny change in referring to ’students who struggle with bullying’ makes a huge difference because the children are positioned as persons with the shared characteristic of being involved in an inappropriate communication pattern, and as persons who would thrive better, if they could find ways to participate in and contribute to more helpful, appreciative and learning-focused interactions.

[1] With inspiration from Morgan (2000).

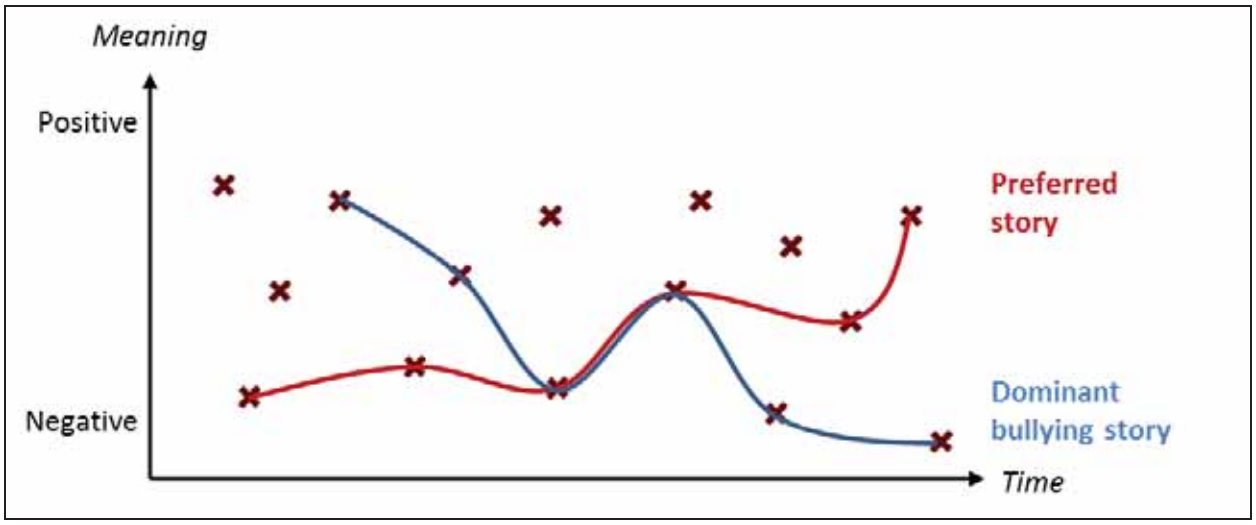

Figure 4. *Reframing a bullying story*

Figure 4 illustrates how we can construct a preferred story by selecting and articulating incidents that do not fit the bullying plot. For example, this might involve an incident where a 'rascal' helps a classmate with his or her math exercises, or where a 'victim' talks about an achievement that he or she is proud of. These incidents may challenge the plot and the seemingly obvious character of the story. As a result, new meaning may be ascribed to incidents that were previously included in the dominant bullying story. Thus, in Figure 4, two Xs are included in both stories. All school actors can contribute to reframing stories by paying attention to the incidents they talk about in class, during recess, in the teacher's lounge, at parent-teacher meetings etc.

We will now look at a very systematic and deliberate way of staging events that may serve as a basis for reframing a bullying story.

Reframing 'Bullying' by means of an Undercover Anti-bullying Team

In many cases, when a bullying story has taken root, school professionals have already spent considerable time and energy thinking about and discussing the problem with each other and with parents and students. Often, they will have tried several initiatives in an attempt to put an end to the bullying. If bullying has become a serious problem despite these efforts, the actors will be keen to take action but also have a sense that they are running out of options, and that they have already tried everything.

In these situations, the undercover anti-bullying team is a viable option. The method is designed for situations where certain students have already been positioned as bully, victim and 'the rest of the class'. The method works by offering the students who have been positioned as bullies a chance to reposition themselves as *helpers* who are on a special mission: to protect, care for, acknowledge and show respect for the person or

persons who have been positioned as victims of bullying. If one position changes, the other will too, and thus, the bullying story is reframed. No bullies, no bullying story. The undercover anti-bullying team method was developed by guidance counsellor Michael Williams, who describes the method in the article *Undercover Anti-bullying Team: Redefining reputations and transforming bullying relationships in the school community* (2010). In their book *Safe and Peaceful Schools – Addressing Conflict and Eliminating Violence* (2012), Michael Williams and John Winslade describe a range of methods and approaches for handling conflicts and bullying and, not least, developing healthy peer relationships and learning environments in school.

In Australia, New Zealand, the United States and Canada, where the method is widely used, students are encouraged to contact the guidance counsellor with problems, including bullying. The guidance counsellor may then suggest that the teacher set up an undercover anti-bullying team in a process headed and managed by the guidance counsellor. The Danish school system does not have a similar guidance counsellor position, but here, an AKT[2] counsellor, an inclusion counsellor or a teacher who is not attached to the class could take on the task, provided they are trained in the method. In most schools, the process would probably be handled by the AKT counsellor.

The process has five phases: recognition of the victim, recruiting the undercover team, creating the specific plan, monitoring progress and celebrating success. The full process typically lasts two to three weeks. We will now describe the process as it might unfold in a Danish school context.

Phase One involves acknowledging the victim's experiences of bullying. This takes place in a conversation between the AKT counsellor and the student. The AKT counsellor interviews the student, and together, they co-author the student's story. The AKT counsellor explains the process and the five phases to the student and also explains when the AKT counsellor and the student will meet again. They discuss which students from the class might be candidates for the undercover anti-bullying team: two of the students who are responsible for the worst bullying and four other students who do not bully and who have not themselves been bullied.

In *Phase Two*, the AKT counsellor calls the six selected students in for the first meeting. The counsellor emphasises the need to keep the identity of the group members secret from the rest of the class. The AKT counsellor first reads the victim's story about his or her experiences with bullying aloud, and the six students are given an opportunity to voice their sympathy with the victim's situation. Next, the AKT counsellor reveals the name of the bullied student. The students are now asked to join the undercover anti-bullying team, which is tasked with banishing bullying and showing respect and care for the student who is bullied. When the students have agreed to join the team, *Phase Three* begins, where the AKT counsellor helps the team members draw up a plan, as each student makes suggestions about his or her own assignments. This may involve things

[2] AKT stands for *Adfærd, Kontakt, Trivsel*: behaviour, contact and wellbeing.

like including the student in conversations, smiling to the student and greeting him or her, inviting the student to join in activities and standing up to behaviours that may be considered as bullying. Over the next few days, the team members make an effort to do these things as often as possible.

Once the team has been formed, the AKT counsellor involves the other teachers attached to the class in a dialogue about the team's strengths and resources in relation to the assignment; this has the added effect of raising the teachers' awareness and involving them in the process and of positioning them as outsider witnesses who influence and enhance the conversations and actions that contribute to a new narrative for the class.

In *Phase Four*, the AKT counsellor meets separately with the undercover anti-bullying team, the student who was bullied and the teachers to discuss progress and assess the effectiveness of the plan. The AKT counsellor conveys the feedback to and from the various actors to ensure that everyone is aware of each other's positive contributions to ending the bullying and developing helpful friendship relationships.

It is the 'victim' who determines when the bullying has ended, which typically takes about two weeks. Then follows *Phase Five*, where the members of the undercover anti-bullying team convene for a final meeting with the AKT counsellor, and each member is handed a certificate from the principal in acknowledgement of their role in making the school a safer place to be, perhaps accompanied by a voucher for the school cafeteria or another valuable token.

The undercover anti-bullying team is a tool that enables bullies to develop positive relationships with the victim or victims and with the other students in class. Involving the students in a narrative where the bullies are tasked with banishing bullying also offers them a new relational framework that is incompatible with the original bullying narrative. This reframes the role of the bullies, repositioning them as helpers and partners in preventing bullying, and thus in turn also reframes the role of the victim, the teachers and the other students. The bullying story goes away, and negative relationships are transformed into positive relationships.

The method has proved highly effective, and the people working with the method on a daily basis have yet to encounter a bullying story that was so entrenched that the method failed to dissolve it (Williams, J. R., 2012). Although the undercover anti-bullying team is set up as an effort to banish bullying on behalf of the victim, the victim is invariably placed in a new, proactive position. Where the victim's life at school was characterised by rejection, loneliness and shame, he or she is now offered opportunities of participation and involved in attempts at solutions that he or she was previously excluded from. Another key aspect of the new position of strength for the former 'victim' is that it is up to him or her to determine when the process is complete. The strength of the method is that it does not operate with punishment, blame and sanctions but instead offers everybody new positions in a new narrative about community, friendship and care.

Perhaps that is why the method is so effective in such a short time span that requires very few working hours.

Preventing 'Bullying' through Appreciative School and Classroom Culture

A school culture is created by humans, and as such it is also open to change – but how? We will address that question by illustrating how we can develop an appreciative culture, first in a single class and then in the school at large. The key point here is that the more the actors in the school appreciate each other and feel appreciated, the less conducive the environment will be to 'insults' and 'bullying'.

For more than 15 years, there have been efforts to bring Appreciative Inquiry into Danish schools (Hertz, B. & Iversen, F., 2004). Many school professionals have reaped useful experiences, and many specific methods have been developed and tried out. One example is the so-called *well-being class meeting*, which has been developed and implemented in many schools by Berit Hertz, who has worked for a number of years as, initially, a visiting nurse and, later, an independent consultant. The method was first described in her article *Trylleri med mobning – om værdsættende kommunikation med børn* (Magic against bullying- about appreciative communication with children (Hertz, B., 2002) and later in a more detailed and developed version in the article *Mere trivsel – mindre mobning. Værdsættende kommunikation med børn og deres voksne* (More wellbeing – less bullying. Appreciative communication with children and their adults (Hertz, B., 2004).

Of course, positive naming is an important element, based on the appreciative assumption that we strengthen the things we talk about. It is therefore not without consequence whether a method or an activity we apply in school is called 'anti-bullying' or 'well-being'. The naming helps set the stage for the process that teachers and students are invited into and stimulates thinking and actions in a particular direction.

The author describes using the method, as an external consultant, in a class with a variety of problems, including bullying. To be able to work with a class, the external consultant needs the support of the school leadership and the classroom teachers and their involvement in setting the conditions. Some of the classroom teachers take part by listening and contributing to reflections throughout the process. To do that, they need to master appreciative communication. In some cases, the author therefore first conducts workshops with the teachers to convey the basic concepts of the appreciative approach and the associated communication skills. The initial stage also includes introducing the activities to the parents in a letter and perhaps a workshop as an opportunity for them to hear about and experience the appreciative approach.

Next, the classroom process can begin. The method of the well-being class meeting has been used in grades 3 through 9. It includes 2-3 sessions spaced a few weeks apart,

each lasting 6-7 hours depending on the age group, with shorter sessions in younger grades. Here, we outline the process in an abbreviated version:

Preparation: The Students Prepare with Their Parents

The students are given a letter with a list of questions to take home and are encouraged to discuss the questions with their parents. The list includes carefully phrased appreciative and explorative questions that aim to stimulate both the students' and the parents' thinking. A few sample questions: 'What do you think a class should be like for everyone to thrive?' and 'What is going well for you in class?' Next, the student is encouraged to write something down for each class mate in response to the question 'What do you think is good about having X in the class?' This phrasing illustrates the subtle adjustment required to shift the emphasis from the individual to the relationship. The question is not about what the student likes best about X but rather what is good about having X in the class, which invites a focus on how X contributes rather than what X is like. This shifts the focus to the relationship between X and the class.

Day One with the Class

Often, day one (and day two) will involve separate sessions with boys and girls. This is done simply because the group would otherwise be too big, and because experience has shown this approach to be effective. In the rounds described below, the students and the consultant sit in a circle. The teachers sit in the background.

Day one involves the following phases:

Phase 1. The students' hopes and introduction to the appreciative approach

First, the students talk amongst themselves, one on one, about how they hope the day and the process will benefit them as a group. Next, the consultant describes how other classes have benefited from similar processes, and what the appreciative ideas are about. This introduction takes place in a dialogue with the students. For example, the consultant explains that the students will have an opportunity to do magic with words, which is a fascinating metaphor for using an appreciative language that aims to enhance awareness of what works, and what can be made to work well in the future. The students have proved to grasp these concepts easily. As Berit Hertz writes:

> *It has been a pleasure for me to see how much the children enjoy talking about what works instead of talking about problems, as they have done so many times before. It is fascinating to see how naturally they take to the systemic way of thinking…* (Hertz, B., 2004, p. 44).

Phase 2. Appreciative student interviews

In the next phase, the students interview each other based on an interview template. During this phase, they receive help in framing appreciative follow-up questions to the other's replies. In the appreciative interviews the students can draw on the experiences and points of view they discussed or considered in the preparation phase.

Phase 3. Magic or Appreciation Round

After a brief introduction to the concept of 'appreciation', each student now has an opportunity to describe what he or she thinks is good about having X in the class and to

describe what he or she would like more or less of. This feedback is offered to each of the other classmates. In younger grades, this round is called the *Magic Round,* as the term 'appreciation' is less familiar to the students. The Magic Round can have a magical effect, as all the students are seen, heard and made visible. Statements about what a student would like more or less of from someone else is articulated as a *gift.* It is a gift to be told what others think one could do different, because how else would one know? In this phase, the consultant provides support, for example by offering positive reframings of the students' contributions.

Phase 4. Loose Ends Round

In the previous phase there may have been things that did not fit in, loose ends of a positive or negative character. If there are any negative loose ends, it is important to place them into an appreciative framework, based on the idea that in every problem there is a frustrated dream, and that the dream came first. The students are quick to grasp this idea. Then all the students are invited to offer their ideas for solving the problems. To make the ideas as specific as possible, the consultant may use a scale. For example, if a student has said that the solution to a certain problem is a long way away, the consultant may ask, 'If the path is a scale from 1 to 10, how far do you think you will be able to go before we meet again 6 weeks from now?' This sort of question stimulates both the vision of a future where the problem plays a less prominent role and an awareness of the student's own agency.

Phase 5. Possibility Round

Here the students are asked to consider what each of them can do in the future to help everyone thrive more in class, based on an appreciative question. This round helps each student see what he or she can contribute with and to.

Phase 6. A valuing conversation about the process

This follow-up round, where the students have an opportunity to exchange their experiences of the process and of the appreciative interactions is often very active and engaging. In conclusion, the teachers are invited to share what made the biggest positive impression on them. The teachers often say how pleased they were to see the students in new roles and to discover how articulate they are, and how much they can contribute to the classroom culture.

Day 2 (and day 3, if a third day is held) follows the same format but in abbreviated form.

Concurrent with the six phases, there is a process where everybody looks out for 'good words' (Hertz, 2013). 'Good words' are words and phrases that are supportive and encouraging. Sheets of cardboard are put up on the wall, and every time someone spots a good word, it is put up on the wall. The process enhances the children's awareness of good words, and more and more children are keen to add words to the posters. This may include phrases like 'turning a good eye' to something or 'making something good out of

something boring' or 'to say "stop" in a nice way'. Discovering the positive creative energy in certain words is an eye-opener to many children.

Berit Hertz underscores that the teachers have a big responsibility for continuing the process once the consultant leaves. The teachers have to be good at noticing the small signs indicating that the students are contributing, and that the class is moving in a positive direction: 'The transformation of a classroom culture is so tender and delicate at first, and therefore it is essential that the teachers support each other in **believing in the process** and making the other classroom teachers pull in the same direction' (Hertz, 2004, p. 47). Here, the teachers can find support in the notion that 'people most often have good intentions and that given an experience of choice, they would most likely engage in respectful behaviors' (Beaudoin & Taylor, 2009, p. 51). It is therefore crucial to shape contexts where the participants have a choice.

The method was developed and has been repeatedly carried out and described by an external consultant. This raises the interesting question whether it could be carried out by a school professional. This involves two key conditions: First, there has to be someone who can position him/herself as a sufficiently neutral facilitator in relation to everyone and maintain an open and curious attitude to the students' statements. If the class teacher has a part in creating an inappropriate communication pattern, it may be preferable to ask an external teacher, an AKT counsellor or a school psychologist to head the process. Second, it is important to consider who has the necessary competences with regard to shaping the right context and mastering process management and appreciative communication.

This is a good example of an approach that aims to develop the classroom culture. There are many other ways of putting the general school culture on a more appreciative path. Based on inspiration from our consultancy work in schools and selected literature (Hertz, 2004; Hauger & Karlsen, 2006; McAdam & Lang, 2009; Beaudoin & Taylor, 2009), we have put together a small bouquet of examples of minor initiatives that may have a major impact without requiring additional time compared to what school professionals are already doing. They simply involve spending the time differently. Here are some examples of initiatives that only require limited resources, provided the actors have the relevant communication and process skills:

1. Changing the content of conversations in the teacher's lounge to only exchange stories about what went well in the previous lesson and what one looks forward to in the upcoming lesson.
2. Organising a buddy scheme between older and younger students, where an older student helps a younger student during recess, offers help with homework assignments and assists the student in getting to and from school.
3. Using the weekly class session to exchange stories about the most exciting learning experiences, and how the student managed to learn.

4. Asking the students to collect ‘golden moments’ for a specific period and recording them in a memory book in the form of drawings or texts.
5. Introducing ceremonies to celebrate good learning results rather than celebrating personal events like birthdays.
6. Teachers agreeing, for a specified period, to send students to the principal’s office when they have done something good that they should be acknowledged for.
7. Arranging for the principal to contact the parents of four students each week to tell them about something constructive their child did in school – things that either promoted classroom learning or which supported the others’ well-being.
8. Using parent-teacher meetings as an opportunity for mutual interviews between parents and teachers about which initiatives proved particularly effective in relation to the challenges that were discussed at the previous parent-teacher meeting.
9. Involving students and a classroom teacher in a project where students prepare appreciative questions to interview other teachers about what they enjoy most about their work.
10. Having students interview each other’s parents about what they are happy about when they come in to parent-teacher meetings.

Here it is important to note that the underlying philosophy of change behind the ten ideas outlined above is that change can be initiated anywhere in a school and spread to the rest of the school.

Contrasting Perspectives

Whether we apply an individualist or a relational way of understanding ‘bullying’ makes a big difference, both for the development of relationships and interactions among the students and for the roles that school professionals are assigned. The individualist understanding tends to cast school professionals in the role of observer, investigator, judge and enforcer, all of which are roles that position them outside the course of events. These roles only allow for *defensive* action in the sense that efforts are merely reactions to the on-going events.

The relational understanding, on the other hand, casts school professionals in *proactive* roles, where they are involved in shaping contexts, defining frameworks and ground rules for dialogue and managing the process with the careful use of language skills and creativity. In this perspective, school professionals are not only aware of their own share in the events but take important and well-considered steps to co-create the events. They make things happen. Better things.

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Section III
Systems Change

Sowing Seeds of Synergy
Creative Youth Workshops in a Multi-cultural Context

Anni Vassiliou and Thalia Dragonas

> *"Love the flow. Trust the flow and follow it. No matter if you embark for one destination and you end up at another. Plans, maps, compasses are just tools. They are not a means in themselves. It is the flow that assisted me during this journey. And the journey continues…"*

These are the words of a young male youth worker at a closing group session of the *Creative Youth Workshops*, operating within the overall frame of the *Project on the Education of Muslim Minority Children*. The team of youth workers has been working together for the past thirteen years with children, adolescents and young adults, members of the minority/Muslim and the majority/Christian society in Thrace, Greece. The closing session in question was a mutual exploration of understanding and experience, rendering the process of sharing feelings, communicating and exchanging personal and collective experiences, a collaborative act of narration.

The present chapter draws upon the experience of the *Creative Youth Workshops*. We begin by placing this collaborative project within the overall broader intervention targeting the education of Muslim minority children. We then describe the Creative Youth Workshops as such, i.e. their function and the social constructionist ideas informing the way they were set up. We view the Workshops as a long-lasting journey in jointly constructing alternative positive possibilities of living together in a conflict-ridden social environment. In the remainder of the chapter we elaborate on seven critical bridges that served as crossings in this journey for all those actively engaged in the co-creation of the Workshops. The unique journey traveled in a process of relational flow, the bridges crossed and the exciting partnership community of youth workers, youths and their families that emerged constitute a story narrated by the authors of the chapter. As every narration, it is socially constructed and does not seek to establish the truth of its own premises. Our narrative is an invitation to dialogue, to shared reflection on our assumptions and practices, and to new forms of understanding.[1]

[1] The present project is placed within a paradigm which views practices as action centered and with future forming potential from which may spring more viable outcomes (see Gergen, in press). In his seminal paper "From Mirroring to World-Making: Research as Future Forming" he discusses the value of social research practices which enhance the potential of a populace to experiment more creatively in developing alternatives to unwanted practices.

The Project on the Education of Muslim Minority Children

The Project on the Education of Muslim Minority Children is a comprehensive intervention inside and outside the classroom, taking place since 1997 in the North-Eastern Greek province of Thrace, bordering Bulgaria and Turkey. Minority children are Greek citizens of the Muslim religion, members of a territorial minority established by an international treaty in 1923.[2] Some are Slav speaking, few are Romani speaking while most of them are Turkish speaking. In Thrace, there exists a system of separate schooling for minority children and the overwhelming majority opts for it at the primary level, while, at the secondary level, common education is more frequent.

The project in question aims at the social inclusion of minority children, by confronting massive under-achievement and decreasing high drop out levels from compulsory 9-year education.[3] It comprises the teaching and learning of Greek as a second language, the development of multiple educational materials, compensatory classes in various subjects, and extensive teacher training and work with the community.[4] It is a complex intervention, taking place amidst antagonistic political interests that have deep historical roots. The past and present conflicts between Greece and Turkey permeate the educational system. The content of the intervention and the social, cultural, historical and political contexts within which it was developed and is operating for the past 17 years, has been described extensively elsewhere (Dragonas & Frangoudaki, 2008; 2014; Dragonas, 2014a; 2014b). The reader, though, must keep in mind that the minority student population, most of which have a Turkish ethnic identity, bears the stigma of being a life-long enemy of Greece. Thus, underlying this long-term educational intervention is the accommodation of demands emanating from a deeply contested diversity, the empowerment of educators, students and community in order to challenge the operation of coercive power structures, and the encouragement of an open-minded dialogue between the majority and the minority.

One of the most important developments in this project was the establishment of ten Community Centers that have educational and socializing functions. The Centers offer a wide range of activities, including creative play and artistic expression for preschool children, afternoon compensatory classes and summer courses for primary and secondary school students, the use of computers, Greek language classes for parents, Turkish language classes

[2] In January 1923, following the 1919-22 Greek-Turkish war, a protocol was signed at the Lausanne Peace Conference on the compulsory exchange of populations between Greece and Turkey. The two parties were to exchange the Greek Orthodox population living in Turkish territories with the Muslims on Greek soil. The same protocol also defined those to be excluded from the exchange: namely Orthodox Greeks (the Rums) in Istanbul and Muslims in the Greek province of Western Thrace. One hundred and thirty thousand Muslims remained in Western Thrace and about the same number of Rums in Istanbul.

[3] At the onset of the intervention drop-out levels from compulsory education was as high as 65% compared to 7% which was the national mean at the time (Askouni, 2006).

[4] It was initiated by the Greek Ministry of Education, funded, in the main, by the European Social Fund; and has spanned over four phases: Greek Ministry of Education, Life Long Learning and Religious Affairs, Operational Program in Education and Initial Vocational Training I (1997-2000), II (2002-2004), III (2005-2008) and IV (2010-2013). It is directed by Professors Anna Frangoudaki and Thalia Dragonas. Interested readers can look up www.museduc.gr

for Greek-speaking teachers, and vocational guidance for the youth. They maintain an on-going dialogue with parents, teachers and representatives of the community who are encouraged to join events, organized every few months, where children can show and share their work.

The Centers constitute *loci* where rigid boundaries are disrupted, both those set by the majority to exclude the minority as well as raised by the minority to protect itself. They are staffed by equal numbers of minority and majority personnel and they constitute the sole spaces in Thrace where majority and minority members are actively engaged in a collaborative task, striving for a common goal. Moreover, they represent the only state institution where children and especially their parents can use their preferred language for communication. They are a microcosm, where different identities coexist and languages alternate, where knowledge is generated and identities are negotiated, and there is an active contribution to the discourse of identity politics in Thrace. The dynamics developed within the Centers, as well as between the Centers and the overall society, reaffirm that the act of claiming identities and claiming the spaces of identity are political acts.

Owing to historical developments and political conflicts that are beyond the scope of this chapter, as well as to a deeply ingrained mono-cultural orientation of the Greek society in general, the identity of the minority in Thrace is contested by the majority; it is formulated within asymmetrical relations of power and in opposition to the dominant identity of the majority. As regards education, Cummins' entire work focuses on issues of identity and power intersecting, both in classroom instruction and in school organization (Cummins, 1996, 2004). He describes in a most convincing way the 'slow destruction of identity'- brought about by a student's remaining trapped in oppressive school and social situations. He underlines the ambivalence and insecurity of identity that marginalized groups often experience. Power relations and educational achievement are tightly connected. The causes of underachievement are buried, says Cummins, in the complexities of dominant-subordinated group relationships. In order to reverse school failure, we must approach this relationship in dynamic rather than static terms. The challenge facing education is to turn relations of power from coercive to collaborative. In the context of the latter, power is created and shared within the interpersonal space where minds and identities intersect.

To realize this end, the *Project on the Education of Muslim Minority Children* brought to fore important identity issues, claimed a position of knowledge embedded within communal relationships, introduced a move from authoritative monologic to dialogic practices of meaning making in the educational setting, and raised the historical, social and political conditions within which education of the minority took place.

The Creative Youth Workshops

The *Creative Youth Workshops* constitute an important sub-project within the overall intervention.[5] They are physically located within the two larger Community Centers in the

[5] Anni Vassiliou (one of the authors of this Chapter) was the one who conceived the idea of the Creative Youth Workshops and assumed the role of the facilitator; that of a skillful catalyst in this long process reflecting changing dynamics.

towns of Xanthi and Komotini. They are known to the local society as D.E.N. by their acronym in Greek (Δ.Ε.Ν.).[6] The youth themselves coined that name at the very beginning of their creation. ΔΕΝ, however, is not only an acronym. As a word, it has an additional meaning denoting a negation or an opposition, expressing the rebellious tendency so characteristic of this age group. ΔΕΝ was subsequently used as a prefix assuming various playful uses in the way youth were to describe themselves and their activities. The connotation thus would change from negative to positive according to the specific use and context.[7] In our text we will keep the name D.E.N. referring to the Creative Youth Workshops.

Figure 1. *2007: co-creating D.E.N.'s door sign*

D.E.N. are 'real', 'imagined' or 'symbolic' spaces that host activities for children, adolescents and young adults across various divides of Thracian society–minority/majority, Christian Orthodox/Muslim, rural/urban. They are venues that offer the potential for collaborative learning and the material reality of a workshop with lots of resources, tools, supplies and equipment. Youngsters are urged to explore their psychosocial environment, to look inwards towards themselves, to look outwards towards their community and express themselves creatively through various artistic means, such as drawing, theatrical games, narration and written text, constructions, clay modeling, collage, photography, video, computer processing. They are encouraged to exercise collaborative projects and participate actively at every stage, that is, to visualize them from the start, to plan, to implement, to reflect upon the process of creation, and at the end to come up with an end product. Such practice enhances youths' skills in recognizing their needs and interests, in working by themselves, but at the same time in dialoging and participating creatively in teamwork, and addressing collective demands and constraints. If we were to formulate it in a nutshell, D.E.N., strived for a shift from the self-contained "I" to the related self; from the bounded and limiting "us" to the dialogical "we".

From the very start, D.E.N. were created with the hope that the local community

[6] The initials of «Δ.Ε.Ν.» stand for three words «Δημιουργικό» (Creative), «Εργαστήριο» (Workshop), and «Νέων» (Youth)–hence «Δ.Ε.Ν.» translates into Creative Youth Workshop.

[7] It was interesting to observe how quickly both youth workers and youth alike came to love a game that has been named "ΔΕΝ with or without the dots". Written or spoken without the dots in between the individual letters, a phrase which begins with the word "ΔΕΝ" connotes negation, but with the magic dots, what was once a confirmation of subversion and invalidation turns into affirmation. For example, the phrase "Δεν συνυπάρχουμε" (den synyparhoume) means "we do not coexist". Add the dots in between the letters, and it becomes "Δ.Ε.Ν συνυπάρχουμε" - "Creative Youth Workshop: We do coexist!". Similarly, "Δεν θέλω" (den thelo) (I don't want to) becomes "Δ.Ε.Ν. θέλω" (Creative Youth Workshop: I do want to) or "Δεν σε καταλαβαίνω" (I don't understand you) becomes "Δ.Ε.Ν. σε καταλαβαίνω" (Creative Youth Workshop: I do understand you).

would eventually adopt D.E.N. as part of community practice. Thus the aim was, and still is, to support existing community initiatives, while introducing new methodologies in empowering young people, and drawing upon social constructionist and systemic principles. In all phases of the intervention, D.E.N. gradually opened up to the broader surrounding social space. They developed extensive cooperation with the local community and the local government in order to form a human support network that would contribute to the self-sustained future of this institution.

"A ladder, not a leader"[8]

In setting up DEN, in the years 2002-2004[9], the "not-knowing" approach was adopted as described by Anderson and Goolishian (1992). They formulate the "not knowing" position as "entailing a general attitude or stance in which the therapist's actions communicate an abundant, genuine curiosity… a need to know more about what has been said, rather than convey preconceived opinions and expectations about the participants, the problem or what must be changed. The therapist, therefore, positions himself or herself in such a way, as always to be in the state of 'being informed' by the client " (ibid, p. 29). The 'not knowing position' approach can easily be transferred to any intervention concerning individuals, groups, families or organizations that views human action to result from understanding that is created through social construction and dialogue. Actually Anderson and Goolishian have also used their approach to understanding therapy to building pathways of change in organizations (Anderson and Burney, 2000).

We adopted the 'not knowing position' by refusing the role of *a priori* 'experts' trying to impose preconceptions and by adopting an interpretative stance relying on the ongoing analysis of experience as is occurring in the specific context. In embracing such a framework, we did not employ trained youth workers brought in from the outside. Following a formal call, a group with a number of young people was formed representing the polymorphy required by the project–women and men, members of the minority and the majority, varied age groups and life courses, differing educational and training backgrounds (e.g. social sciences, the arts and expressive mediums, and experience in youth activities).

We knew well, as says Wachterhauser (in Anderson and Goolishian, 1992), that language and history are both conditions and limits to understanding. We also knew that understanding is not an individual but a relational achievement (Gergen, 2009). Sharing through dialogue, an understanding of the complex and conflict ridden social environment in Thrace was a prerequisite for negotiating a common reality and for mapping the context within which D.E.N. would take root. A dialogical process was set in motion where each participant's already created meaning would acquire new interpretations and where previous experience would not close off new meaning. This was to open the way toward the shared,

[8] Manav Sadhana believes that communities are in need of a ladder that would help their members to discover and appreciate their great potential, and to climb towards that greatness. http://tinyurl.com/m3zoc65 (entry in "The New Constructs" website).
[9] Creative Youth Workshop 2002-2004. http://www.museduc-mm.gr/den/images/stories/docs/CYW02-04.swf

dialogically created, construction of a team that would actively engage in activities with children and youth and that would mediate with the community.

Journeying Across Seven Bridges

Figure 3. *2014: "Building bridges of coexistence" - summer D.E.N. youth project*

The practices and processes of the past 13 years are not easy to summarize. We have thus chosen to elaborate on seven critical bridges that have served as crossings in a journey for all those who were actively engaged in the joint creation of D.E.N.: (1) from involvement to engagement; (2) from creation to co-creation; (3) from individual to relational leadership; (4) from separate language worlds to new ways of meaning making; (5) from single to multiple narratives and identities; (6) from intervention to community autopoiesis; (7) from parallel lives to coexistence. These bridges are meaningful on three levels: as context-specific methodologies and tools of socio-cultural youth-work; as milestones in the development of personal and interpersonal skills involved in community building; and, as a shared process of learning.

Although a bridge may be a meaningful concept to capture a crossing, these bridges were by no means traversed linearly or walked forward step by step at a steady pace. The past 13 years represent a process of building bridges over a meandering river, being crossed at times at a snail-like pace and, at others, with a sudden forward or backward leap, or even falling off from the bridge altogether and climbing up again.

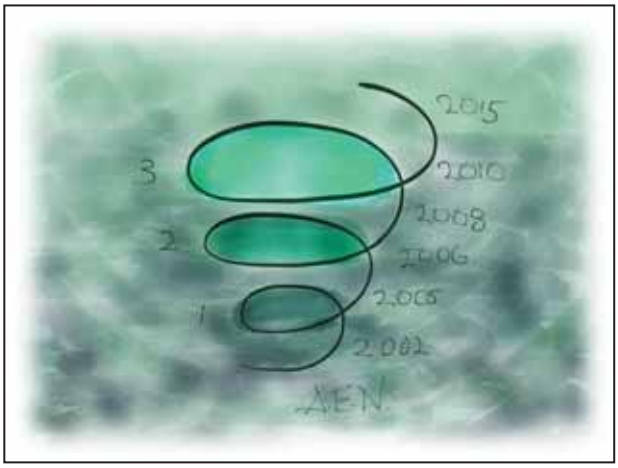
This process was captured in the symbol of a spiral that acquired for D.E.N. an emblematic character. As spirals abound in nature and the cosmos, it is only natural that they may also metaphorically be relevant to human processes. Some of the words associated with spirals, in terms of metaphorical meaning, were: 'balance,' 'progress,' 'direction,' 'initiation,' 'centering,' 'expanding,' 'awareness,' 'connection,' 'journeying,' and 'development.'

Figure 4. *2003: D.E.N. calendar project*

Metaphorically, spirals may imply both a process of journeying inwardly to develop awareness of self and to connect with one's own process of cognition (assumptions, beliefs), as well as a process of journeying outwardly to connect and to express oneself in a social context. For the project as a whole, the spiral came to be a useful way to represent both these journeys in an always becoming, never-ending process. If spirals represent the evolutionary process of learning and growing, for the project's evolution, the spiral became a way to map time in meaningful phases. The

project's three phases can be conceptualized as an expanding helix consisting of three distinct upward spirals[10]. Each of the spirals created valuable resources as they grew for all those engaged with the project.

From 2002-2015, a total number of 36 youth workers–across diverse divides of the Thracian society–have been engaged with the development of the project, while the number of young people who have taken part in the multitude of project cycles and events has steadily multiplied from 150 in the project's initial 3-year phase, to 847 in the project's subsequent 2-year phase. The project's current, 5-year phase has included over 3,000 young people and their parents in its diversity of projects (cycles of youth groups, summer camps and small scale events). It is interesting to note that several young people have grown up parallel to the project's lifetime, and have become youth workers themselves during and after their university studies. This fact has put into practice one of the main tenets of the project–namely empowering community members to meaningfully engage in processes of social change concerning their own communities.



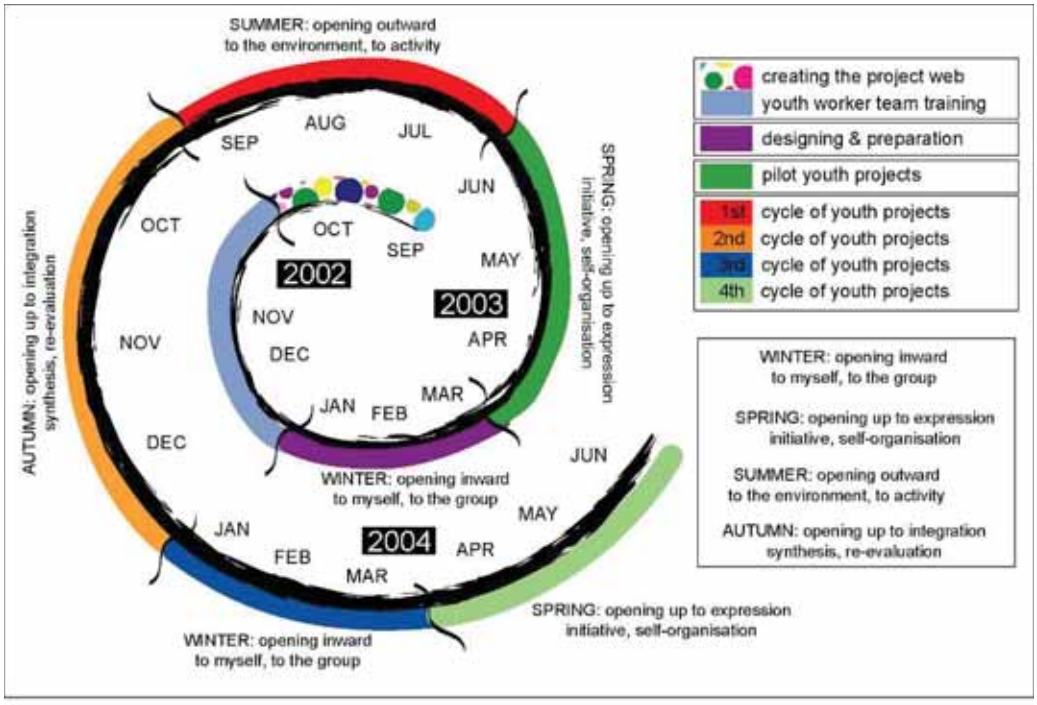
Bridge no 1: From involvement to engagement

The entire Thracian society has been nurturing antagonistic traditions, expressed in parallel monologues. Both minority and majority groups have been practicing mutual blame and have known how to operate on opposing realities. It is ‘monologism’ that denies the existence outside itself of another consciousness with equal rights and equal responsibilities, another “I” with equal rights. Monologue is deaf to the other’s response (Bakhtin, 1984). The young people in their 20’s and 30’s, who were trained as youth workers and the youngsters who were to become members of D.E.N., have been socialized in seeing the world in monologic and exclusionary terms.

Thus, the one important bridge they had to cross was the one leading from exclusion

[10]Although D.E.N. have been operating for the past 13 years, this was not certain at the onset, since the state's project approval procedure was constantly divided into distinct time phases with additional extension phases granted along the way: 2002-2004, 2004-2005 (extension), 2005-2007, 2007-2008 (extension), 2010-2013, 2013-2014 (extension), 2014-2015 (extension). This might have well been a major handicap, as one cannot design a long-term procedure under such circumstances. However, since the project had originally been conceived as a spiral, it was relatively easy to envisage "project cycles" beginning and ending. Three distinct spiral cycles can be discerned within the 13-year period of the project's development: 2002-2005, 2006-2008, 2010-2015.

to a sense of belonging. Barriers in the outer social reality, barriers in an inner social circle, as well as intrapsychic barriers became the objects of negotiation. Engaging with one another gradually opened up a space of learning. Skills in active participation were introduced. The first steps in the training of the youth workers involved the shaping of the actual physical space D.E.N. would occupy. This decision was intricately connected with what the youth workers-to-be would like to do in these workshops, who was to actively participate in forming the group, and who could invite other young people to join this space. Training continued with issues such as how one might recognize the needs of the youngsters that would be part of the D.E.N. activities; how would one design a project that responds to these needs; how would one implement and evaluate; how would one make good use of the equipment and tools available; how would one serve the role of the youth worker and how would one be actively aware of the group process? As supervision of the youth workers focused on the work in progress with the young, they were encouraged to integrate previous learning. Likewise, the groups formed with the youngsters required participants to engage in the process of shaping the D.E.N.'s character–both in terms of the physical space and in terms of the workshop's activities. For many young people, this was a novel experience and helped to shape a new way of being in a social space with others, especially others from a different socio-cultural setting.



PROJECT ON THE EDUCATION OF MUSLIM CHILDREN 2002-2004
TIMELINE OF SUB-PROJECT: "CREATIVE YOUTH WORKSHOP" (SUPPORT CENTERS OF XANTHI & KOMOTINI)

New verbs were practiced: 'to initiate,' 'to propose,' ´to connect,' 'to dialogue,' 'to negotiate.' Each of these conversational modes opened up more mutually appreciative interchange. Youth workers were provided a space to connect and talk with each other, to 'reach out,' to engage in shared mutual inquiry. This practice involved jointly examining, thinking, questioning and reflecting. However, as Gergen (2009) points out, a new mutually

shared construction presupposes what he calls “imaginary moments” in the dialogue in which participants join in visions of a reality not yet realized. It is in these imaginary moments that the orientation shifts towards cooperation and participants move toward a common purpose. In doing so, they redefine each other as “us” (p. 127). Dreaming and fantasy have been powerful resources in the dialogic search for meanings and understandings. Let us turn to the youth workers' own words, while they were looking back at these first experiences of transformative dialogue:[11]

> *It was when we started sharing the same space, sharing our concerns, our dreams, our expectations. When we touched each other’s soul. When we gradually started looking into each other’s eyes, capturing the reflection of our gaze … so that a chain was formed, a chain of gazes that was getting stronger and stronger as “in unity we stand strong”, and this strength acquired shape and smell, smell such as this of a pine tree, such as this of incense... Who can tell me that there is no room for dreams? There is always room for dreams, they snuggle wherever they can, provided you let them loose…dreams know where they come from and where to go, when they are to live and when they are to die…they know because they are free. (M., male, 40 years old, member of the majority).*
>
> *Inspiration. Energy. Caring. Touching. Mutuality. (I., female, 40 years old, member of the minority).*
>
> *We have learnt how to build a network of relationships and we can do this again. We can transfer the experience to the new ones to come (O., male, 26 years old, member of the majority).*

Bridge no 2: From creation to co-creation

Our continuously changing world demands that individuals, groups and communities also have to change. Creators change more easily.[12] Creativity and self-expression are personal skills, enabled or inhibited within a specific social context. Yet from a constructionist standpoint it is creating in a group, in deliberately relating and operating together that “we construct worlds of good and evil, joy and sorrow, happiness and despair…and it is through relationships that personal well being is achieved” (Gergen, 2009, p.107).

D.E.N. activities created the conditions that promoted greater creativity on all levels possible–be it on the interpersonal, intergroup or intercultural one.

[11] As the second phase of the D.E.N. project came to a closure in June 2008, the youth worker team was invited to take stock of the project by reflecting upon its process and their own involvement. During the task, each individual tracked his/her own experience from the moment of joining the team to the present and produced a written text. These were then shared in small groups and synthesized into group narratives. The session ended with a discussion of these diverse viewpoints in the large group.

[12] For a constructionist approach to change as creating see www.taosinstitute.net/change-as-creating

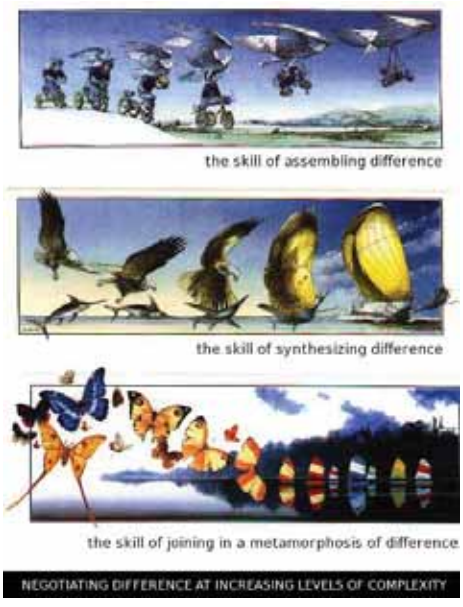
“ [the clay objects that were crafted] had multiple meaning” said a young member of D.E.N[13]*. "You might ask how can friendship be related to a cup, but for us it has great relevance. For example, it is said that you must honor a cup of coffee that is offered to you for forty years. Now what can you say about a pencil-holder!? Of course, it too has its own meaning. It shows us the variety of friendship, just like the pencils it holds, it symbolizes unity, it creates the foundations of friendship and ensures unity and cohesion” (male, 12 years old, member of the minority).*

Figure 5. *2004: "Handmade" project - the meaning of friendship*

"D.E.N. transported me to different worlds. It was a space where I expressed the artistic world I had inside myself. It is as if the world begun there. I learned to share my feelings there. It was a space I shared friendship...even if one quarreled, our room smelled of respect" (male, 13 years old, member of the minority).

Through our work with many different groups of youth over the years, we have come to perceive the skill of "working together"/synergy in the group as a shared learning process involving skills that enable us to negotiate differences at an increasing level of complexity. Namely, these are the skill to assemble differences, the skill to synthesize differences, and the skill to join in a metamorphosis of differences that leads to emergent novelty.

At the simplest level, two parties were able to welcome difference when they came to perceive their difference as something “missing” in the other, and hence of value when they could contribute this difference to a common goal. When a relationship assembled difference, new possibilities opened up for both parties that were not there before, although there was minimal change in the parties as the form of each separate part was retained. Learning to dialogue–through thesis and antithesis–brought change in both parties simultaneously, as each contributed to a novel synthesis. At the most complex level, diversity was not only welcomed, but also recognized as a necessary condition in order for novelty to emerge. Diversity became a source of wealth for the relationship, as all parties contributed their unique viewpoint, leading to novel synthesis that retained the differing qualities of each party, albeit in a



[13] The clay objects referred to are part of a project named “Handmade” which was carried out in the fall of 2003. For more context of this project see http://www.museduc-mm.gr/den/images/stories/docs/CYW02-04.swf

novel synthesis. At this most complex level, each party both changed all others and was changed by all others through a process of metamorphosis.

The youth spent long hours discussing what “being creative” meant and what a "workshop" was, in essence. They utilized stimuli for creative expression, explored various different expressive tools and materials, and practiced skills of communication, cooperation and utilization of difference. They reflected upon questions such as, "how can D.E.N. become a relational space that will have room for all, where can our differences enrich what is jointly created, rather than separate us?" "what skills do we need to practice in order to achieve this?" "how can we handle mistakes?" and "how can we learn to process experience and draw knowledge that can be applied as we walk this relational path?".

Figure 6. *2003: "Creating a workshop of our own" project - imagining a common space*

D.E.N. was initially conceptualized by the youth as an uninhabited rock which, in turn, became an island on which each inhabitant could practice (in the youth's own words) "respect," "cooperation," "trust," "involvement," "cohesion," "equality," "love," "freedom of opinion," "dream," "craze," "faith." New and exciting possibilities were born out of the shared group process. Let us quote the youth workers, as they jointly reflect upon the question “how might we conceive of the terms 'group' and 'synergy' so that they become useful tools for a youth workshop which is creative, multicultural, and interactive?”[14]

> *"Individuality dreams, teamwork gives wings to the dream. Synergy sets our individual gears into motion. An individual unit has capacity; a group has the power to transform. At times we function as individual units, while at other times we need to mix our different shades so as to create uniqueness."*
>
> *"Life, a train with many carriages. Helping an individual mobilizes another, and all together, we mobilize society. We cooperate towards a common goal. From a common whole, we create a multitude of uniqueness which coexists within a community."*
>
> *"A better outcome, many minds, multiple ideas. With self-knowledge, empathy, support - hand in hand, side by side, we achieve the impossible."*
>
> *"In a group, leader and led have the same share of responsibility on the journey towards the goal of the group. A group is a body all of whose members need to cooperate in order for it to function. When one part of the body "aches", all of the other parts mobilize so that it may heal. A group is something to lean on without being afraid of falling. It is communicating with one's eyes. A group is feeling with another, whether near or afar. Cooperation has the power to light up understanding of diversity.*
>
> *A group is trust, security, closeness, respect, understanding, acceptance, will, time, flexibility, communication."*

[14] In the Greek language, these three words all begin with the letter "D" and came to symbolize the evolution of D.E.N. to D.[3]E.N. – and later D.[4]E.N. with the addition of the word “differentiated”.

Bridge no 3: From individual to relational leadership

We tend to think of leaders as those who exert an influence over their followers. Effective leaders are thus those who inspire and direct in ways that bring about organizational success. However for the constructionists, as say Gergen and Gergen (2004), this view of leadership is deeply flawed, because it fails to take into account the way by which meaning is created in relationships.

The challenge of leading D.E.N. was the adoption of the role of a leader as coordinator of a network in a process of shared meaning making. Turning again to biological theorizing of the mind, informed by Maturana and Varela's (1980) assertion that "we can never direct a living system but only disturb it," we were deeply concerned with how to "disturb" it. According to Maturana and Varela, living systems respond to disturbances from the environment autonomously with structural changes, i.e. by rearranging their patterns of connectivity. The kind of disturbance that would trigger this rearrangement, so that people relate in ways they are not used to, would be, according to Capra and Luisi (2014) to introduce information that contradicts old assumptions, to present issues from different perspectives, to demonstrate that things people believe they cannot do, are already accomplished elsewhere, and, to invite people into the conversation.

> *“In my role as a leader, I facilitated conditions that "disturbed" the system, promoted each one’s individual capacity and that of the group as a whole to generate creative solutions, and followed the group process closely. I nurtured networks of connection and communication, creating an atmosphere of trust, mutual support and safety in the group; made space for diversity; introduced new ways of doing things; encouraged venturing into the unknown, questioned; promoted reflection and provided feedback" (Anni V., coordinator of D.E.N.).*

What was achieved in training the youth workers was a move from individual to relational leadership and a transformation of teamwork to a network of co-creators. Similar achievements were noted when the youth workers or the youth themselves were challenged in assuming leadership.

Bridge no 4: From separate language worlds to new ways of meaning making

We would like to make three points in reference to the way the complicated subject of language use in Thrace was understood in the context of D.E.N. The first point draws from Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* (1953) and his thesis that meaning originates in action. The meaning of a word presupposes our ability to use it, he says. Language is intricately woven together with other actions. The speaking of language is part of a form of life from which its meaning is derived. Such activity is necessarily social, and thus meaning is an interactional achievement.

The second point draws from the argument that language is anything but neutral. Language use must be understood within particular socio-historical conditions of domination or power asymmetries (Bourdieu, 1991). There are sociocultural and political implications in our way of speaking and in the particular language we use.

The third point, related to the second, is that the language into which we are socialized as children is fraught with biases and predispositions. Yet the language-culture

connection does not preclude that there is on-going language socialization, and that we continue to be receptive to new socializing agents and activities (Ochs and Schieffelin, 1984). People can move in and out of socio-historically fashioned ways of speaking. However, it is naive to think that people will change their language habits easily. Such habits are strong and resistant to change for both personal and institutional reasons.

Thrace is multicultural and multilingual. There is a complex, hierarchical interplay of national, ethnic, religious, linguistic and cultural identities among the minority groups constituting the Muslim minority and between those groups and the majority. The greatest part of the minority is Turkish speaking; at school Turkish and Greek are the languages of instruction. However, Turkish is not the mother tongue of all members of the minority. Some speak the Pomak language (a Slavic dialect close to Bulgarian) and some others Romani. Their status of power is uneven–Turkish having the highest status. Language use is tied to ethnic identity and is marked by political conflict. Furthermore, the majority who speak Greek do not know any of the minority languages. If the members of the minority want to communicate with members of the majority they have to do so in Greek.

Each year, D.E.N. organizes a summer camp with mixed minority and majority group youth at the banks of the river Nestos.[15] At one such summer camp, the youth workers devised a playful situation to address the issue of language use. The youth workers were not aware of language theories. They did not know Wittgenstein's analogy between language and a game. Nor did they know Bourdieu's theory about language. Yet they had been socialized in a way they had come to know in their gut that language signifies status. In their game, children were met every morning at a fresh water spring by a fairy who spoke an alien, fairy language and was accompanied by a 'translator.' In order to communicate with the fairy, majority and minority children had to invent new codes of communication and translation between different languages. The purpose of the activity was to address issues of language use and linguistic hegemony in a playful way. Greek, Turkish, the Pomak or Romani languages were not an issue here. If children wanted to communicate in the fairy language, they had to go beyond traditional linguistic barriers, confront prejudice, and invent new codes of communication. Children could also become fairies themselves, if they wished, and thus address the challenge of adopting new roles.

Figure 7. *2011: Summer D.E.N. - the fairy game*

In this and other activities organized at the camp, children communicated in whichever language they preferred. Yet, we observed that all the children mainly used

[15] The camp at the banks of the river Nestos each year encapsulate the essence of the entire D.E.N. project. Coexistence is facilitated since youths spend a long time together–relational flow in syntonicity with the flow of the river. Nestos being a geophysical frontier of Thrace has served as a metaphor for negotiating boundaries. For more see Vassiliou and Ligdopoulou (2005). http://tinyurl.com/olfe2yp

Greek–the language of the majority. It was clear that minority children, who were the numerical majority at the camp, accommodated to the needs of the Greek-speaking children who did not know Turkish or Pomak. There was an obvious reversal of linguistic hegemony, and it was the minority children that were there to integrate the majority ones into the camp and create a shared reality.

The above vignette corroborates Gergen's conviction that "as we speak together...we participate in creating the future–for good or ill. If we long for change, we should shake up our traditional ways of constructing the world and set out to generate new ways of making sense" (2009, p. 12). With their charade-like game the youth workers and the children challenged traditional ways of meaning making, and by using new forms of language/action created new possibilities for extending their grasp of what goes on within relationships.

Bride no 5: From single to multiple narratives and identities

Narratives or story metaphors are an important dimension of hermeneutic and social construction analysis (White and Epston, 1990). In a therapeutic setting, using the narrative metaphor has led therapists to think about people's lives as stories, and to work with them to experience their life stories in ways that are meaningful and fulfilling. Using the metaphor of social construction has led them to consider the ways in which every person's sense of reality has been constructed through interaction with other human beings and institutions (Freedman and Combs, 1996). Yet, narrative practice has also shown to be relevant to working with communities and groups experiencing divide and emotional distress (White, 2003). Such use of narrative practice is based on the premise that all communities have a stock of knowledge and living skills that provide contextually and culturally relevant proposals for action in addressing communal concerns.

Narratives stimulate reflection on our lives and fashion our sense of identity. Yet since narratives are cultural and historical, and are by definition molded in relationships, they, at the same time, represent our collective sense of identity (Gergen, 2009).

Narratives were used extensively in the various groups–whether those of youth-workers or those of youth within the DEN. Individual stories soon gave way to collective stories narrated by the entire group. A wide range of themes emerged from these stories: "the rainbow connecting two planets, so their inhabitants could cross and exchange goods and ideas," " the magical almond tree that could make wishes come true, that helped the poor and healed the sick, and that could tell between truth and lies," "the multicolored tree in a field that had only known the colors of green, red and yellow," "the cold planet deserted by its inhabitants who searched for warmth and love," "the lord who died of loneliness," and many more. The story metaphors were woven around concepts of love, color, difference, misfortune, sharing, redemption, connectedness, hope etc. Stories were

Figure 8. *2013: the magical tree*

constructed drawing from traditions and practices, explicitly or implicitly within larger stories that alluded to the youths' interpersonal, social and political contexts. Youths grappled with questions such as: "is there a 'me' in 'we,'" can "there be a 'we' in 'me' as well," "can there be mirror images of the same process?"

A low round table *(sofra* – a word both the Turkish and Greek languages share in common) became a symbol for a group of pre-teenagers, as they learned to cherish sharing stories as much as sharing food. Rigid self-narratives based on low self-esteem gave way to synthesizing complex narratives based on self-confidence and recognition of ability. In the youth groups, stereotypes were continuously breaking apart in the process of sharing narratives of diversity. The skill of empathy acquired flesh and bone. Conflict between differently defined identities, and conflict in relationships became entrance points for multiple narratives. By mutually shaping the story-telling, the re-telling, and the new telling, youth experienced the richness of different voices and sometimes the simultaneous contradictory feelings and opinions.

Figure 9. *2012: Both food and stories are shared at a common round-table (sofra)*

A tool was adopted to enhance awareness of the group process during story telling. It was called "weather reporting." Everyone stopped and noticed the atmosphere. What is there that is not being said? What needs to be expressed more fully? What needs to be listened to more attentively? Skills were enhanced of one being open to another's viewpoint, another narrative of reality without one feeling the need to discard one's own. Youth came to realize that if construction of meaning and knowledge truly arise out of a web of interwoven relations, then through the act of listening one becomes an actor in this story. In the stories told and shared in the groups, the aim was not to find an ending, happy or otherwise; but to proceed with an on-going process of reflection, exploration, and opening up of new pathways.

Bridge no 6: From intervention to community autopoiesis

The *Project on the Education of Muslim Minority Children* entered the field as an intervention designed from the outside without replying to a quest explicitly expressed by the local society. During the first phases, its opponents claimed that outsiders, such as us, were not in a position to understand the local social dynamics.

Hence, a big challenge was how to reverse agency, and how our activities would come as a response to claims and demands expressed by the community members themselves. A way to reverse agency was to foster collaborative creation of power, both within the intervention team and among the latter and the community–what Cummins (2004) identifies as empowerment. This process entailed bringing to light those who have been socialized as to be invisible, and give voice (singular or plural) to those accustomed to being inaudible.

This challenge confronting the overall project was equally pressing for D.E.N. In the

long years they have been operating, activities were co-designed and interactions were promoted that confronted these forms of disempowerment. The adoption of the 'not knowing position,' described earlier, was the first step. Moreover, trust building was a *sine qua non* condition for laying the foundations for collaborative relationships. Enhancing awareness of one's embeddedness in a specific social context contributed to allowing agency to arise.

The message that was spelled out was that, as we become agents of change, we acknowledge each other as partners in community building, and the process as mutually transformative. This inevitably gave increasingly more room to voices, experiences and identities that needed to be understood. The importance of local knowledge was taken into account –the kind of knowledge, expertise and 'truths' that are created within a community of persons who have first-hand, personal understandings of themselves and their situation.[16] As D.E.N. were developing, the inclusion of new agents and community participation was growing steadily. Parents were brought in and encouraged to contribute their wealth of cultural knowledge and to engage actively, as partners in their children's formal and informal education. Once their cultural background was affirmed, local cultural associations also found a role in D.E.N.'s activities.

A mobile unit that was later added to D.E.N.'s material resources, and applied a methodology whereby remote settlements were visited; the unit parked at the central square where the youth workers made themselves available to the community and suggested a shared inquiry about the issues at hand. The next day, the mobile unit returned and the youth workers offered an array of ideas on social activities whereby community members (irrespective of age) could connect and create with each other. A number of very interesting projects emerged out of this methodology, which invited mutual inquiry, shared engagement and joint action.[17]

Figure 10. *2013: traveling to remote mountain villages (D.E.N. van project)*

Continuous interchange and flow of information and affect among the youth workers and between them and their community, strengthened their sense of competence. The process of empowerment they lived through has become a form of community autopoiesis. Youth workers have gradually become more autonomous and in need of less guidance while at the same time able to weave stronger relational ties. They feel comfortable in their role as agents engaged in a process furthering the self-producing, self-maintaining, self-repairing and self-relational aspects of living systems, as described by Luhmann (1990). They have come to be

[16] Anderson (2007) stresses the importance of local knowledge in reexamining and seeking alternatives to the fundamentals of knowledge.

[17] Interested Greek-speaking readers can refer to http://www.museduc-mm.gr/gefseis/index.php/2012-03-08-09-09-49/2012-04-28-12-39-47?start=11 and http://www.museduc-mm.gr/gefseis/index.php/2012-03-08-09-09-49/2013-04-07-15-28-56

in a position to negotiate a balance between the degree of attainable systemic and individual autonomy, and the heteronomy brought about by social norms–be they cultural, traditional or coercive. As auto-referential systems are continuously confronted with the dilemma of disintegration/continuation, the members of D.E.N. and their wider community know that this dilemma yields an ever-changing set of available choices. They must make these choices wisely if they wish to continue to grow or alternately they will disintegrate. And, as choice becomes empowered, the dreaming process that brings sustainable social change is facilitated.

Bridge no 7: From parallel lives to co-existence

While the Balkan region is a 'powder-keg' where ethnic conflicts have often led to violence, there has been very little overt physical violence in Western Thrace (Yiagcioglu, 2004). Minority members in their history of ninety years have in the main employed non-violent protest methods in response to the restrictive and discriminatory measures they have been subjected to, while the government and the local majority population have been especially careful to avoid the use of physical violence. However, the Greek state has been ambivalent towards the minority that has been simultaneously subject to appropriation and exclusion. There has been a lot of symbolic violence that is beyond the scope of this Chapter.

Difference has functioned to make, in Elias (1994) words, a differentiation between the 'haves' and 'must-not-haves,' and has created a sharp division between majority/first class and minority/second class citizens.

The people of Thrace, especially those who are members of the majority Christian community, often claim that "here in Thrace we live peacefully together". Yet in reality what they describe is parallel lives, in separate worlds that operate parallel universes. The greatest percentage of Muslim minority population lives separately in ethnically and linguistically homogeneous settlements. Thus, our entire intervention was geared towards strengthening practices of co-existence by fostering the understanding of the other, creating the conditions of interactive and collaborative relationships, challenging coercive relations of power, and, negotiating identities.

An early project that engaged pre-adolescents is an indicative example of the reluctance and fear, characteristic of both minority and majority, to transform parallel lives to co-existence. A group of youngsters, members of both the minority and majority, decided to carry out a project of building a village where both Christians and Muslims would live together. The decision of what kind of village they were imagining and the materials they would construct it with, was the youngsters' choice. A dyad of both Christian and Muslim youth workers acted as facilitators.

The youngsters engaged in long conversations, and came up with various suggestions that were soon discarded– there could be no river because a river divides; there could be no mosque because if there was a mosque there should also be a church; there could be no school because they had to make a decision between a minority school where separate education is provided and a state mixed school; there could be no soccer field because the followers of different teams fight among themselves. The youngsters were unable to confront

conflict and incapable of finding solutions. It took them many weeks of long conversations and shared deliberation before they could visualize the village of their dreams that finally had both a river with a bridge, a mosque and a church, a school and a soccer field. In this new space, group members were invited to live together in such a way that everyone would be included. Having completed the design of the village, the group entered the phase of constructing the individual houses and the common space.

During the course of the task, group ties were further developed. Issues of difference, cooperation, and the significance of each individual and the group as a whole were elaborated. The walls of the 'transparent hotel' became "windows through which I can look at my life," said a youngster, and "I can express my own views and wishes". Conflict among group members led to exploration of "who am I in the group".[1818] Thus, the project served a double purpose: imagining co-existence in the common village as well as analyzing coexistence in the group process, here and now.

Figure 11. *2004: "Constructing a village of our own" project*

Figure 12. *2003: D.E.N. summer camp, flowing along*

Epilogue: The Emergence of a Partnership Community

In setting up D.E.N. the big challenge was how to transform traditions that have nourished splitting, coercive relations of power and suppression of voices. Our attempt was to give rise to a relational hub where all members would have a sense of connection, belonging, participation and ownership. Informed by social constructionist ideas, a number of principles were applied that supported the co-creation of a partnership community. As described at length in the previous pages, collaborative processes were encouraged; relational leading was adopted; dialogic practices were emphasized; dreaming and imaginary moments were encouraged; narratives

[18] For this and other projects see http://www.museduc-mm.gr/den/images/stories/docs/CYW02-04.swf

were exchanged; creativity was enhanced; mutual inquiry and joint action were reinforced; and community agency was strengthened. D.E.N. brought people together, across ages and cultures, who shared dialogues on issues that mattered and realities that challenged them. Youth workers, youth, young adults and their families found themselves engaged in a process of multi-being and of becoming social change agents.

Figure 13. *2003: yesterday's youth -today members of the youth worker network- release a dreamcatcher of their sharedexperience into the river at the end of a week longcamping project alongside the river Nestos*

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Educational Change: A Relational Approach

Loek Schoenmakers

Education and its change processes are always human endeavors. They are designed by, practiced by, and for the benefit of people, every day. It is within the relationships we build that we give meaning to educational change. In many contemporary attempts at educational change, this human aspect seems to be forgotten. Isn't this odd? Educational change processes become quite different when we centralize the human element that "produces" change, the relational aspect. A change process will become more sustainable when it is based on appreciation, continuously fed by collaborative and dialogical practices.

From 2007 to 2009, I worked as an educational specialist in the Republic of Suriname, South America, where I was involved in the design of the new long-term reform program for Primary Education, PROGRESS 2008-2013 (the PROGRam for Effective Schools in **S**uriname). This project was designed with the idea that reform would be more powerful if we based it on Suriname's own best vision of education. We wanted to create a Surinamese publication with which people could identify and be proud. We organized a positive participative change process – *The I Believe in You!* – process throughout the whole country, from the main city into the interior. The process was based on social constructionism and the ideas of Appreciative Inquiry.

Two years later, we proudly presented this desirable vision in the book entitled, *I Believe in You!* During these two years, our little group of three initiators increased to more than 400 local participants, varying from artists, teachers, students, and school leaders to fifteen key persons in the Surinamese society and 'ordinary people' such as market women, police officers, farmers and village captains. Ten thousand books were given to student-teachers, teachers, school leaders, civil servants, school advisors, school inspectors, NGO's, and others. This widespread dissemination initiated a nationwide conversation amongst many. The publication was later translated into English to make it accessible for all within the CARICOM[1] community.

After publication, the nationwide vision for education was further developed, through the creation of a National Institute for Teacher Training, the revision of the Teachers' Colleges' curriculum, and the strengthening of the Departments within Ministry of Education such as School Inspection and School advisory.

This chapter briefly outlines the construction of this change process and its impact. The process brought many insights concerning how we might change the way we look at educational reform processes. The process can be seen as a relationally constructed educational reform attempt. Therefore, it is quite interesting to present it as *an* example of

[1] Established in 1973, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) is an organization of 15 Caribbean nations and dependencies.

how a change process can appear when using a constructionist stance, compared to traditional methods.

I believe in You! a dynamic approach to a nation-wide educational change process[2]

In spite of the many inadequacies of the Surinamese educational system, we assumed that everyone has had some positive experiences in their lives. We were convinced that focusing on the positive aspects of people's lives would energize them to look at their own context in a more positive way. We knew that opting for possibilities would change the usual vocabulary employed in the community from one of hopelessness to a hope. It is for this reason that we chose social construction and Appreciative Inquiry as a leitmotiv for the whole process. We worked simultaneously at all levels within the system, nationwide.

Adhering to the principle of inclusion we established a process that would involve as many people as possible from all sections of society. Thus, instead of having views developed by so-called experts and using a detailed plan, we approached the process as a dynamic happening, an expedition full of challenges involving as many Surinamese people as experts as we could. We did not work from a detailed plan in which every step was designed ahead of time. We knew our goals. We had ideas about our approach and we knew the first step. Yet, we did not always know what the next steps would be. I experienced this as a wonderful adventure, suiting my pioneer spirit. The more static, common approaches to educational reform tend to design each step of the change process in advance. Yet, within our dynamic approach, we consciously created many open spaces that invited all participants to offer their ideas. This is a typical aspect of the dynamic approach: we did not know *if* and *when* these ideas would come into the process. Many ideas were unpredictable and could not be planned. They emerged like flowers. Appreciating the contribution and using the suitable ideas of all participants strengthened the *I Believe in You!* process. Using these emerging ideas generated trust amongst all, which I think should be the most important parameter for sustainability within every change process. I would like to call this *relational trust*, because it points to the constructionist idea that trust must be seen as a by-product of working together, and not as an isolated trait in the individual.

The Construction of the *I Believe in You!* Process

I Believe in You! is the title of the final publication which expresses the local dreams and views about future elementary education in Suriname. We strongly believed that the educational change process in Suriname would be more powerful if it was based upon a mutually agreed vision, and if focused primarily on the learning triangle of pupil, teacher and environment. This view was shared and understood by all stakeholders. We used the idea of a

[2] For more detailed information about the I Believe in you ! process, go to http://www.taosinstitute.net/loek-schoenmakers or go to the free download at http://www.taosinstitute.net/happily-different

generative image, making the process transformational/generative. Busche & Marshak (2013) state that all dialogic, organizational development approaches have the same three underlying change levers: (1) a change in the organization's dominant narrative or discursive patterns leads to a change in social relations, (2) a new, generative image creates an opportunity for people to imagine new ways of thinking and acting that is compelling to them and (3) a disturbance in patterns of interaction is managed so as to sustain the emergence of new, more complex patterns of interaction.

I Believe in You! expresses the metaphor of pupil-centered education in which the learner and the learning process are the center of change. Clearly, the *I Believe In You!* process has given many insights into the complex processes of educational change. By looking carefully at this process, I came to the realization that the approach of the so-called *planned* change or the *makeable* world is too unilateral for dealing with the dynamics of change. I appreciate the unpredictable, autonomous and spontaneous aspects of change processes that, in the end, strengthen sustainability.

The Process

The process involved three phases: (1) The preparatory phase, (2) the development phase of the publication, and (3) the implementation phase. I will not discuss *a final phase* because, seen from the constructionist view, the process continues indefinitely. Thus, we cannot speak of a final moment where the process and its influence end. Now, almost six years later, many activities are still continuing, based on this publication.

The Preparatory Stage

When I started work in Suriname I saw all kinds of initiatives aimed at improving elementary education. I realized that all these initiatives would be more powerful if Suriname could have a clear idea of the direction in which the Surinamese Government wanted to go. A shared vision would help to bridge the many gaps between divisions, NGOs, donors and private initiatives. It was clear that a strong commitment was needed on the part of the Ministry of Education, if we wanted to realize this shared vision, which we could anchor right from the beginning within the existing system. From the very beginning we formed a coordinated, strong team (MINOV[3], VVOB[4] and UNICEF). *I Believe in You!* became a joint initiative.

Creating a shared vision from a social constructionist point of view involves constructing meaning by coordinating relational approaches in the form of dialogical and collaborative practices. ‘Vision’ must then be seen as a dynamic concept. Vision, which is alive and present in human beings and also in organisations, is viewed as a by-product of the dynamics of interactions. However, vision only thrives when we are frequently in dialogue about it and are open to development and changes.

Choosing the change approach: social construction and appreciative inquiry

One thing that becomes increasingly clear to me in guiding reform processes is that *how* we choose to study or change will influence the whole process. I am deeply impressed by the impact of the relational approach. The best way to explain the relational approach for me

[3] MINOV is the Surinamese Ministry of Education.
[4] VVOB is the Flemisch Education for Development Organisation

is to visualize the change process as a spider's web. This spider's web is build up by many threads. At each crossing point we can visualize human beings connected to each other – being in relation. All human beings are important. Everyone is needed and therefore included. No one can be missed. It is "in relation with the other" that the process of meaning making is occurring, simultaneously at many places – visible and invisible, formal and informal. The many interactions feed these relational threads, making them stronger, keeping them healthy and transparent by using dialogical and collaborative practices. It is exactly within these relationships or between "people who are in relation" that meaning making takes place. Appreciated Inquiry (AI) can be seen as social construction in action. We used AI as the foundation throughout the Suriname project. Within the view of AI, every question we ask invites a response. Thus, the questions we ask are "fateful." When these questions are future oriented and based on appreciation, the answers will be in the same vein.

We appreciate what already exists, what we would like to create more of, and what sort of future is desired. Every participant is seen as an expert and as valuable for the process. This stands in contradiction to most common educational reform processes where typically everyone is not seen or heard as important, where there is an alienation between the so called experts and those who work within the schools (i.e, the teachers and their students). Their voices are often silenced, with the consequence that reform is not supported by all and is, therefore, not sustained.

Our aim was to involve as many different players as possible and give them opportunities to join in, be in dialogue and collaborate. I call this "expanding the web of participation". We wanted people to share their many stories of positive experiences in education. Taking pleasure in learning and motivation are very important in this respect. As already stated in the introduction, despite the inadequacies of the Surinamese educational system, everyone has had some positive experiences. Are there moments when students have been actively involved in their education? How can education increase the involvement of students? How can students develop and maintain their eagerness to learn? What energizes teachers or school leaders in their work? What useful lessons can we learn from the past? I was convinced that focusing on the positive aspects would energize people to look at their own context in a more hopeful way. I knew that opting for chances and possibilities would change the usual vocabulary employed in the community from hopeless to hopeful. Nevertheless, as the constructionist say, *our words create our worlds*.

From the very beginning, the positive, appreciative focus of the change process influenced every thought and step taken. We met frequently and discussed problems to be solved, while new opportunities were identified. We turned problems into mutual challenges. The minister's advisor was of vital importance to us. He advised about the progression of stages during the process and lobbied within the Ministry and among politicians. In fact, we trusted one another and appreciated each contribution to the process.

Organising a supportive network and finances

The dream of producing a publication was not enough. We needed to establish supportive networks and to find finances for the development of the manuscript and the printing of ten thousand books. These books, which we entitled at the end of the process, *I Believe in you!*, would be the end result of the relational processes in which the shared vision would be given voice. This written shared vision would play an important role within the

future reform of the Ministry of Education departments, The Teacher Colleges and their curricula, the new centre of Professionalization, and the starting point for the many change attempts of many connected organisations.

By forming a coordination group of three important partners, and by sharing our dreams in appreciative ways, we succeeded in securing financial support. The appreciative stance attracted members of other organisations who slowly established a network of positive contributors to the process. One of the most powerful features in the whole process was the continually expanding network – the spider's web – of many people with all kinds of experiences and knowledge, who added their own networks.

That is exactly the key feature – let's call it Holy Grail –of this relational change process. Weaving a network of supporting people is like constructing a building place for change. Change processes are human constructions. It is not too difficult to understand that these change processes will be enormously strong when all the strands of the web are nourished continuously in positive and appreciative ways. These networks are dynamic. Within the process of proceeding *together* and making the process *together*, many by-products emerge and, in turn, each strengthens and sustains the whole web.

The Development Phase

The development and simultaneous activities of the *I Believe in You!* process began with the forming of the "coordination group". If looking from an individualistic viewpoint at the process, one could say that the whole change process started at the moment the activities began within the local community. But social construction regards change processes as dynamic, with no fixed beginning in a person, situation or plan. The climate for change was surely already there before we even started. The local history and collective memory already existed in people's minds and experiences. Deep within the consciousness of many, ideas of a better future for education were already silently forming, unknown as yet by those who would lead the reform. We didn't make a detailed plan for the whole process. We felt it was better to remain open to those unspoken stories and ideas which would surely come. We knew the end result: publishing the best book possible, compiled by many. And so the first steps would guide us to the next steps to be taken.

Working in spirals, the main steps

The way we worked during the process can be depicted as different spirals. The usual way to express dynamic processes is *one* spiral which shows the movement or process of evolution. The process is easily seen as a linear journey, going from point A to point B. But based on social construction, we see change as a *multi-spiral* process. Many activities and change processes within the greater whole occur simultaneously at different speeds and intensities. This clearly illustrates the statement[5] that there is no single innovation, but multiple innovations/multiple spirals simultaneously occurring. We organized several activities to be carried out at the same time. We worked out the content of the book in greater detail by referencing documents and literature. We had talks with the

.[5] Fullan, 1991, 2005; Lagerweij, 2004

district commissioners of the ten districts to ask them for their commitment and their logistical expertise. We started the complex organisation of numerous workshops, ranging from the coastal region to the interior, to gather people's stories about positive approaches contributing to the development of children. We had to organize training facilities throughout the country, select and invite workshop participants, organize transport (by boat and airplane), fuel, and so on.

We selected twelve teacher trainers who we had observed in action, and who had a positive attitude. These trainers were skilled in the principles of Appreciative Inquiry (AI) and used their expertise to improve the concept of the "district workshops" which they would later organize all over the country. Interestingly, these trainers, among many others, became increasingly enthusiastic throughout the course of the project. This enthusiasm spawned an avalanche of new ideas for each additional activity and commitment increased accordingly. The growing number of people involved also meant an expanding network. There was room for everyone's ideas and the little seed we had sown was growing into a luxurious plant.

Identifying important relations/key persons

We were new in the Surinamese society, so we needed others to help us establish the process. It is vital to identify important relations and key persons to the process. I use the term *bridging persons* to illustrate the essential function they had. The more the process evolved, the more key persons we found and the further the networks expanded. Some of the key persons we found were within the Ministry of Education, the ministerial advisor (who also had many connections within society, politics and the ministries), the facilitators who knew many people in the districts, the gallery keeper who knew many artists, and the ten district commissioners who knew the possibilities within their districts very well.

Identifying fifteen key persons of society for personal interviews

It was clear that we wanted the commitment of the whole Surinamese society, so we came up with the idea to interview important key figures who had proven their worth in Suriname. Once again, the ministerial adviser helped us identify these people. This was not an easy process. We had to gain trust and build relationships with these persons, who were often strangers to us. After all, we were new consultants, and foreigners. Each interview was an interesting experience. We interviewed in a very open way, often not really prepared or really knowing who or what the key person was. We focused on talking about dreams, hopes and successes in a positive way. By using this appreciative method, we could build trust and relationships with these key persons. We harvested many interesting stories, which we later incorporated into the book and the DVD that we also produced. From the early beginning of this process, we had the idea to film as many activities as possible, not knowing at that moment what we might do with the film. During the process, the idea evolved to produce a documentary about the change process, to show the society (but also government and politicians) that the end result – a shared vision about education – was a relational product of many, instead of a small or single group. The documentary was copied onto a DVD and added to every single book.

Coordinating activities to committed key players within society, MINOV and politics

The more the process evolved, the more key persons we discovered. The spider's web was growing and growing. Whenever we found it suitable, we invited key people to participate in different activities. Some of the most important activities included the feedback

sessions. We organized several rounds of feedback with these key persons and Surinamese educational experts. We found them at schools, teachers' training colleges, MINOV divisions, NGOs and other places. It was not an easy process, but it was vital. We wanted ownership and commitment for the publication from these important key players, especially for the process *after* the publication of the book. For this reason, we consulted them whenever possible, including them and their expertise within the process.

Mobilising the district commissioners of the various districts

We wanted a broad involvement of society. Up to this point, all educational reform in Surinam had been planned and undertaken in the main city, Paramaribo. Those people and teachers living in the far away districts had never been asked what they found important. Their voices had neither been heard nor valued for many years. Thanks to the ministry's advisor, we were able to connect with the ten district commissioners at a very early stage of the process. Their commitment was crucial when we invited people to join the workshops, as well as in solving the many logistical questions we had.

We realized that having some understanding of the different culture of each district was an important condition for building relations and being able to create change.

Organising the AI workshops throughout the country

The AI approach was an ideal way to connect with people and to hear their stories. A search was initiated to reveal people's positive experiences, ideas, desires and dreams. AI formed the basis for numerous workshops all over the country, asking what gives life in education, in development, and in learning. Thanks to the tireless efforts of all district commissioners and school inspectors, a variety of people from diverse social backgrounds and districts were invited to participate. The result was astounding. People were enthused and energized. They could hardly stop talking about their personal, positive experiences. It was an impressive achievement, both in terms of the workload and in terms of the harvest. Dozens of workshops were organized. The trainers often had to go back several times, because people wanted more and felt good because they were heard and seen. The trainers were in relation within each other and shared their expertise, which helped to improve the workshops along the way. They also stimulated one another to reach for the best results. We received vital assistance from the district commissioners, who had been approached early in the process. Their commitment helped us solve many logistical problems. We had to use all kinds of transportation – cars, boats and small airplanes – to reach all the districts. The trainers had to be very flexible in their approach. Since they had chosen in which district they wanted to train, they knew the local contexts and already had networks.

The stories were always positive, enthusiastic and touching. People were eager for more. It had been a golden idea to employ skilled trainers with positive attitudes and also with knowledge of the local contexts. Their commitment was so strong that they often solved problems as they went along. More than three hundred and fifty people, from all over the country, took part in these workshops: teachers, school leaders, students, inspectors, board members, directors of organisations and NGOs, market vendors, officials, counsellors and traditional leaders, mothers and fathers, fishermen, farmers and so on.

The final writing phase

The many activities involved much organisation and coordination. When we had almost finished writing several chapters, something fundamental happened. New colleagues

arrived from Europe to assist in the program and they had, of course, their own way of looking at what had been done. They were very critical of the content. They found it too academic; it was too difficult to read, particularly for the target group (mainly teachers), who we had hoped to motivate. Even though we were almost ready for final editing and printing, we decided to put the whole process on hold, rethink the content of the publication, and re-write every chapter of the book. We wanted the best and, in spite of all our efforts, what we had was not good enough. We appreciated the criticism and changed the entire concept of the book. This meant a delay of nearly three months; but it also meant better quality and a growing commitment and ownership on the part of the new colleagues.

We included the most important key players in our final feedback efforts and, once again, the minister's advisor gave valuable assistance. We showed the critical participants the first edits of the layout, accepted their feedback and proceeded to final editing, layout and printing.

Finally, together with a group of children, we presented the book to the government and to the public. The atmosphere in the room was very special. Everybody who attended had been involved in the process in some way or another. We all felt somehow connected. Everyone was touched by the spirit of this book. This was a once-in-a-lifetime moment, never to be forgotten.

The implementation phase: The activities contemporaneous to the I Believe in You! Process.

Contemporaneous, to *the I Believe in You!* process were many *visible* and *invisible* processes going on in Surinamese society and the educational world. It is important to mention that, while the *I Believe in You!* process was evolving, other processes were started to improve the quality of Teachers' Colleges and the quality of supporting units of the Ministry of Education such as the School Advisory and School Inspection. The National Institute for Teacher Training was established. There were also many reform attempts by NGO's and a huge reform organized by MINOV itself for the eleven-year system of primary education. The nationwide vision, to be published in *I Believe in You!*, was seen as a foundation for these contemporaneous activities. I will limit my description of the reconstruction of the *I Believe in You!* Process. However, it shows that we had to deal with many simultaneous change processes. Often this issue is underestimated, although the influences of these multiple, contemporaneous, visible and invisible processes can be great.

The activities after the book was published

Change has no end. That is quite a statement! From a dynamic view, everything moves and touches everything else. The beginning of the *I Believe in You!* process started long before our first activities. And, similarly, although the book was published after two years of hard work, the process didn't stop at that moment. From a constructionist view, the process continued, directed and undirected, visibly and invisibly. Activities were organized to sensitize the community, such as television programmes, short commercial clips and radio programmes, and workshops countrywide. The work of improving the Ministries' departments continued, as did that of the Teachers' Colleges and the National Institute for Professionalisation and so on. We also translated the publication into English. This enabled the Minister and his staff to participate to a greater extent in discussions within CARICOM, where English is one of the main languages spoken. Our strategy was that leading political

figures, like the Minister of Education, would commit themselves to the views presented in the book. They would be asked questions and would have to answer them. In this way, the Minister was relating with others, becoming a relational resource which would support the sustainability of the process.

New participants came into the process and some left. However, whether they stayed or left, new insights, new knowledge and new experiences came from them and influenced the process. Other organisations became curious and asked for information.

Most important, ten thousand people received the publication from jungle to city, and started to talk with their families, friends and colleagues. Imagine their immense surprise when they discovered their own voices in the book. An important issue to mention is that the on-going building of strong webs of relationships continued to support the process after the book was published. This shows the enormous and important power of building positive bonds between people working within processes.

The I Believe in You! Process and the Constructionist Stance

Throughout the process I gave attention to the traditions, the Suriname's communities, and the situated practices of the participants at hand. I tried to understand what is considered to be real, true and good within the local, social context. This required constant flexibility on the part of those involved, including myself in the different roles of coordinator, trainer and researcher of this project. The purpose of this specific process was to explore the impact of adopting a way of talking and acting which focused on *appreciation and relating*. From this relational stance, I experienced that the coordination group and the participants were placed *in relation*, or came into *joint action*. We started with a selected group of people who were immediately keen to develop a collective vision for elementary schools. In spite of the cynicism of some people, who thought at first that the process wouldn't work in Suriname, we succeeded in involving more and more people. The constructionist stance created an atmosphere of motivation and trust to proceed together.

For me, as a constructionist researcher and consultant, the topic of the inquiry was actually created in the questions I asked (What did people do or make together which generated a form of change or movement?), the selection of Suriname's educational context, and in all the research choices made. By inquiring about the experienced reality in the *I Believe in You!* process, a new reality came into being. By re-constructing what people did together, the meaning or understanding of the experienced reality came into being. Interestingly, during this research, my work in the Netherlands as school advisor was simultaneously influenced.

I Believe in You!, appreciative inquiry (AI), social construction in action

AI was an important basis for the construction of the *I Believe in You!* process. It is my belief that an appreciative stance towards *the other* and *otherness*, especially when working in a different culture, is essential for building relationships. When I organized the *I Believe in You!* process I knew from experience that the process could benefit significantly from it. It was an eye-opener when I first understood that the simple idea of one's stance towards change –problem or solution oriented – would largely determine all of the next steps of the process and, in the end, its outcomes, not only in terms of end results but also in the way the process evolved. Appreciating *the other* and *the otherness*

has had an enormously deep impact in the process where intensive relationships were built. AI can be seen as an illustration of social construction in action.[6] It invites us to proceed together to create new realities. AI practices must be understood as *options* not as *truths*.

What We Might Learn from This

Change is daily business in the education field at all levels. We must see this educational change with all its human qualities. It is designed by humans, for humans, to benefit humans. Using social constructionist ideas as a foundation for designing sustainable educational change processes, we were able to show how important it is to put the human element and focus on "being in relation" and maintaining this. Educational change is people's work, in service for our collective future, the youth.

Putting Back the Human Element

Education is a human, social process. Its outcomes dependent on the quality of the relationships among all participating parties. Requiring primary attention, then, are the processes of relating that constitute the social matrix within which education takes place. The more levels within the system involved, the stronger the process will be. The example described in this chapter shows how this, in return, generated passion, enthusiasm, creativity and engagement. That is what school systems should be: living organisms based on passion of both students and teachers. Schools are meant to empower humans to learn but also to make dreams come true.

The relational dimension in the educational change process has been missing for many years and it is just recently that we are becoming more aware of this. Trust, confidence, openness, participation, commitment, pride, new knowledge and meanings are all by-products emerging from this process of *being in relation* in appreciative ways. By continuously investing and supporting ideas that strengthen the system, by listening to all voices and actively using ideas that strengthen the process, we are able to change in more sustainable ways.

The I Believe In You! process could follow its natural path by being in the moment and letting the process of change unfold. Using participants' ideas strengthens the change process simply because of the fact that their expertise is necessary for meeting our future and achieving our success. By this, relational responsibility can grow and by this we are giving all the opportunity to become producers of change. Everyone is seen as valuable in whatever role or position they hold in the process. I identified four important features: A, Appreciation; B; Building bridges; C, Collaborative practices; and D, Dialogical practices. These four features strengthened the change process significantly.[7]

A: Appreciation

Emphasizing possibilities and positive values has generated powerful energy. Within this change process appreciation has meant that problem-focused language has been shifting

[6] McNamee, 2002

[7] See or more detailed information : L. Schoenmakers (2011) *Educational change is being in relation*. Taos Institute.

towards possibility-focused language. Centering these language practices in what people do together in certain situations has had significant meaning for what they have been constructing. In *the I Believe In You!* process this meant that language practices were slowly changing into practices in which people started to talk about hope, possibilities, chances, strengths, enthusiasm, happiness. A reality of possibility was constructed. By working from an appreciative stance, the process became an inclusive one for all engaging all parties in co-constructing the wished for, positive future.

In the Suriname project, people moved in the process from thinking *I* to thinking *we*. One of the many examples of this was the moment when I heard people talking about *our book.* In using this appreciative stance as a leitmotiv, people felt seen and appreciated all over the country instead of just in the main city of Paramaribo.

B: Building bridges.

From the appreciative stance, seeing differences as possibilities rather than problems helps us to build bridges, to connect with other(s). In doing so, one of the by-products is a sense of the future which is not experienced as threatening. Building bridges must be seen as a *verb*; we need to be constantly active in building and maintaining these bridges. Too often people think that this happens automatically. Maintenance often happens too late when these bridges collapse and we are asked as consultants or advisors to fix them. Using existing networks of participants has been an interesting feature. By using these networks, we could employ local knowledge and expertise to direct the change process *together,* in the wished-for direction. These networks broadened our working field of influence. The challenge was how to build *good* or *healthy* relationships with the key persons within this hierarchy. This participative change work constructed power *with and to,* instead of power *over,* realities. Within the generative change, it became clear that all participants should be given the opportunity to be the producers of change. When we transfer this to educational reform, it illustrates the urgent need to make students and teachers producers within their school systems, getting them out the static position of consumers. During the process, the domain of participation expanded. Differences were appreciated, valued and used. Better understandings and giving space to multiplicity and participation contributed to sustainable change. Gergen (2003) says that the existence of multiplicity and difference may in fact be our best strategy for sustaining the human project. By working at all levels, we showed that everyone was important and needed; that we all are interdependent and interconnected to each other.

C: Collaborative Practices

Change processes occur in many situations where people are doing things together. These performances require the relational other. *How* we do things together highly determines the impact of what we will achieve. Collaborative practices have this extra dimension when we approach them from the relational view. London et al. (2009, p. 1) experience collaboration as a life style and see it as a deliberate and purposeful way of relating which is simultaneously flexible and responsive to others. Again, it is the appreciative stance which invites others to contribute and participate in their own ways, without judging who should contribute what and to what level. Anderson & Gerhart (2007) speak in their work about the collaborative relationships wherein we connect, collaborate and construct with each other.

The collaborative stance produced a co-created meaning. By collaborating to produce new knowledge in the form of ideas or answers, we saw that new interventions could be taken. It was like tapping into the others' expertise (Martin, 1993). The not-knowing stance of the coordination group gave openness for others to help to find answers, which strengthened their commitment.

D: Dialogical practices

The fourth aspect shows that communication and dialogical practices were also an important feature in generating sustainable change. During the whole process in Suriname, all kinds of communication took place. Communication can be seen as people doing something together (McNamee, 2008). Like collaborative practices, dialogical practices can have many forms. By influencing each other, we generate new meaning or knowledge. This is exactly where I think dialogical practices showed their strengths in the change process. The work of Otto Sharmer (2010) has shown interesting ideas of *being in relation* – generative dialogue – producing the power for co-creation from the new relational paradigm, shifting the social fields in which we are used to living.

Dialogical practices encourage appreciation of the many different voices, making each voice as important as the others. Dialogical practices also commit or relate participants to the change process. The social constructionist literature speaks of the importance of creating these situations; it is through dialogue that people can build new relationships, give voice to their own meaning, and simultaneously appreciate the meanings of others. It helps to bridge differences to create better futures.

How Can We Move Forward Within Educational Change?

It has become clear to me that a relational approach has been an overlooked dimension within educational reform for many years. For students and teachers, who are the most important actors in the educational change process, it is hard to deal with the many influences from the outside, such as government policy and politics that limit efforts to give meaning and voice to what is important in daily practice. In the present system, we are often *out of relation*. Policy makers are too far away and do not understand what is really going on in classrooms, which is more than just a mind business, it is also a heart business (Hargreaves, 2005).

But it is not only the policy makers who are out of relation. We meet out-of-relation situations at every level within the educational system. Relational awareness and relational responsibility are still weak within the system, and this keeps many people in the individualist stance with the question: How can I survive in this present system? I see a lot of precious energy in forms of commitment, enthusiasm, power, pride, joy, motivation and so on being lost. Being *out of relation* doesn't bring us the success we need.

I have experienced that *being in relation* and using the appreciative stance generates motivation, enthusiasm, commitment, joy, and pride, as important by-products that can generate sustainable change. Students and teachers, in fact all participants in the educational change process, become producers of change in many ways. By using collaborative and dialogical approaches we can build and maintain strong bridges with the other. All participants in the Suriname project were given many opportunities to become the producers of change. They were heard and taken seriously. This meant that people were actively put into relation. Instead of an élite control group, who might think they have the power for establishing change, all of the participants were involved in generating change. It was actually giving power to those who are, and who should be, in charge of the change: students and teachers.

We live in an increasingly complex educational world with rapid change. Relational thought[i] has shifted my fundamental understanding of change processes. I support the wish expressed by Gergen (2009); "The hope is to bring forth new and more promising ways of life" (p. 124).

People demand systems and services that are more flexible and respectful. They are becoming aware that they are dependent on each other to achieve success. It is not the individual who should be celebrated and be put in the center, as Western culture has done for so long and still does so. Solving the immensely complex problems humanity is encountering now and will mot certainly be facing in the future, compels us to explore dialogical, collaborative and ecological solutions. The better understanding we have of the processes we engage in together, the more we can change our attitudes, together.

It is, in my opinion, a challenge to look at educational change processes in new ways. By looking for something different than the business-as-usual approach, we might create new spaces for new approaches constructed in a collaborative fashion. We may give deeper meaning or understanding to our organized lives, involving others to jointly co-operate in the change process. We may establish processes where we can learn and be in dialogue with each other, giving meaning to our performance and contribution and to the life we live.

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School Principals

Problem Solvers & Appreciative Leaders[1]

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As the person in charge of school affairs in China, the principal is responsible for almost all school issues, from the development of the school and teachers to the all-round personality development of students. The position of elementary and secondary school principal undoubtedly exerts considerable influence on school issues such as educational curricula, faculty allocation, school facilities utilization and campus security. According to Paul V. Bredeson, a specialist in American educational administration, the role of a principal is based on the metaphor of survival, which directly relates to his leadership behavior and work performance. In his view, "Besides making personal adaptations to their administrative role, principals need to help in redefining the nature of their role and its attendant responsibilities. Not only has the role of principal become stagnant, but also it has become a repository for any and all activities not delegated or assumed by others in the school or in the community." He also stated, "the challenge for principal is to examine their daily routines, their priorities, and their resources and see how they might best function through being knowledgeable of the past, remaining well-grounded in the present, and continually looking to the future."(Bredeson, 1985, p.48)

Many elementary and secondary school principals define themselves as problem solvers. Problem solvers are those principals who place an emphasis on discovering, diagnosing, curing or solving problems in the process of running the school. According to them, no school can be problem or deficiency free. It is precisely the hidden deficiencies of a school that must be diagnosed and treated systematically by the principal. The duty of a principal is to discover the hidden problems; identify their causes and put forward corresponding solutions for them. Those problem solvers, more often than not, regard themselves as authoritative experts or as sophisticated doctors whose task it is to diagnose and treat diseases; in this sense the school and its teaching staff and students subtly fall into the category of patients waiting for treatment. The principal's leadership, according to this formulation, should focus on diagnosing problems and deficiencies of teaching staff and students as well as

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establishing related rules and regulations to effectively avoid those potential problems, just as a doctor is supposed to write a prescription for his patients.

According to some educational scholars, problem solvers might be suitable for low-performing schools and newly-founded schools. The former schools "are relatively low in education quality with limited assets for survival and development."(He & Yang, 2006) These schools are often in dilapidated buildings, small yet overloaded in terms of space, with insufficient teaching facilities, books, and other educational materials. As for the human resources of school, they include weak leadership, poor management and low quality faculty; these deficits have an impact on the academic performance of the students and the school's reputation, as well as on efficiency"(Xiong & Chen, 1998). Newly-founded schools cannot avoid problems when there is a lack of support from both the external social environment and internal cultural and value conflicts. Because of these apparent complexities, the problem solver is defined as an indispensable type of principal at those schools.

Undeniably, the problem solver has become a dominant choice in the selection of principals in our times. However, reasonable it may be, it still needs to be point out that the applicable scope and domain of the problem solver are not without limitation; any attempt to overgeneralize ought to be avoided. Being "obsessive" with problem solving might lead one to problem "making", resulting in "self-fulfilling deficit prophesies"(Barrett & Fry, 2008, p.31). Just as British thinker David Bohm puts it, "the problem itself might be wrong or self-contradictory in its premises, yet we hardly notice that;" "it is even reasonable to think that the biggest obstacle hindering the successful dissolving of difficulties faced by human beings is simply because they are labeled as 'problems'."(Bohm & Nichol, 2004, p.73) The problem solver approach itself is not perfect. For example, once a principal has doubts about the effectiveness of a faculty member, it is hard to achieve mutual trust between the two parties. As for the faculty, with "seeking not to be meritorious but only to avoid blame" as their work motto, they become extremely meticulous in working and socializing for fear of making mistakes. What's worse is that faculty may deliberately collect or forge "evidence" against their coworkers or supervisors in order to protect themselves or put themselves in an advantageous situation, which would consequently lead to conflicts in daily school life and gradually transform the cooperative principal-faculty relationship into confrontation and fault finding.

It needs to be emphasized that the problem solver is often the one promoted because our society worships people who are capable of making a difference; secondly, the school organization does have some "real" problems to be identified and resolved. For many people, with strong feelings of "desperation" and being "overwhelmed," political, economic and educational phenomena are viewed in a

"negative" way. This mindset tends to support the choice of the problem solver for principal.

The tendency to focus on mistakes, defects and discrepancies comes into fashion within a negative culture. People are keen to gossip about the merits and demerits of others, while remaining indifferent to what positive changes the future could bring. In the face of the social mindset of focusing on culture deficiencies and system flaws together with the escalating conflicts in the process of globalization, the late Dr. Fei Xiaotong, a well-known Chinese sociologist, in his golden years, made a strategic response: "The world will be a harmonious place if people appreciate their own cultural beauty and that of others, and work together to create beauty in the world." As proposed by Fei, the core approach to changing the mutual defaming and confronting is to promote mutual understanding and appreciation between different cultures, to acknowledge the beauty and merits of one's own culture and to cultivate a spirit of inclusive and diversified appreciation. According to Professor Fei, "To appreciate one's own beauty and that of others means not only to value one's own national culture but also to appreciate alien cultures sincerely; one should not judge alien cultures as excellent or barbarous, …based on one's own national culture standards."(Fei, 2005) The keys to tackle the challenges presented by globalization are, first of all, establishing "a mindset that transcends cultural prejudice;" second of all, "reconstruct understandings of our own civilization and of exotic civilizations at a higher level, beyond current biased conceptions. The world as a whole can not be a peaceful and harmonious place without a new consensus reached by different races, nations, countries and civilizations" (Fei, 2005).

Fostering a positive attitude, in a spirit of self-confidence, rationality and peacefulness has also been emphasized in a report of the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China. It is important to expand the amount and scope of high quality education resources to meet the nation's needs. Also more positive power is needed for the realization of the "Chinese Dream". To fulfill these needs, a new type of leadership in schools is needed. If school principals are shifting from arbitrary problem solver to appreciative leader with specialized knowledge in problem solving as well as profound "psychological capital,"[2] this change not only conforms to appeals for reshaping the spirit of the times, but also meets the demands for creating quality schools.

[2] Psychological Capital refers to a positive mental state in the process of individual growth and development, which is featured by, firstly, being confident to assume responsibility and willing to make efforts to achieve success when faced with a challenging task(self-efficacy); secondly, making positive attribution to the achievements both at present and in the future(optimism); thirdly, being persistent to the setting goals and flexible to adjust the approaches leading to success when necessary(hope); fourthly, always maintaining positive energy and adaptability in the pursuit of success even stuck in dilemma(resilience).

The Turn to Appreciative Inquiry and Appreciative Leadership

Appreciative leaders take "Appreciative Inquiry" (AI) as their work philosophy. As has been pointed out by David Cooperrider, the founder and systematic interpreter of Appreciative Inquiry, AI is "a bold new positive change approach, which is thoroughly separated from problem-based management practice." In AI, "intervention gives way to inquiry, imagination and innovation; discovery, dream and design take the place of negative… diagnosis."(Cooperrider & Whitney, 2007, pp.14-15) Appreciative leaders are also credited with having Appreciative Intelligence. According to Tojo Thatchenkery and Carol Metzker, the systematic interpreters of Appreciative Intelligence, Appreciative Intelligence" is the ability to perceive the inherent generative potential within the present", that is, "the ability to see the mighty oak in the acorn." There are three elements included in Appreciative Intelligence, namely, "reframing, appreciating the positive, and seeing how the future unfolds from the present" (Thatchenkery & Metzker, 2006, pp. 5-6). Leaders of high appreciative intelligence tend to carry out their work, face their life and relate with coworkers in a positive way. Unlike problem solvers, who regard their coworkers or employees as patients waiting to be treated, appreciative leaders never regard themselves as superior experts or doctors who claim more advanced knowledge and higher intelligence than their employees. Their major task lies not in deficiencies, diagnosing and weakness explosion, but in leadership implementation in an enthusiastic and innovative way; they work with the attitude of appreciation, affirmation and value. Appreciative leaders prefer to discover and explore the strengths and advantages of individuals, groups and organizations and to describe and interpret the past, present and future with a positive attitude. The responsibility of leaders is to promote the development and progress of an individual and group as well as an organization by bringing out the best and most beautiful elements hidden in them.

In the view of Diana Whitney, an early innovator in AI, such leaders are adept at practicing their leadership in an appreciative way. As a way of being, a philosophy, as well as a practical strategy, Appreciative Leadership is capable of promoting effective organizational collaboration. "Appreciative Leadership is the relational capacity to mobilize creative potential and turn it into positive power—to set in motion positive ripples of confidence, energy, enthusiasm, and performance—to make a positive difference in the world" (Whitney, Trosten-Bloom, & Rader, 2010, p.3).

Although there is still much to be explored about appreciative leaders, further studies and discussions are also needed for systematic conceptions of Appreciative Leadership; the general views about appreciative leaders according to most researchers are as follows:

Firstly, appreciative leaders keep a positive worldview (Whitney, Trosten-Bloom, & Rader 2010, pp. 7-9) Employees, regardless of their age, race, religion, culture or educational background, are all trusted and respected in an appreciative manner by appreciative leaders. Appreciative leaders believe every employee has his or her own positive potential, which is extremely valuable and needs to be fostered consciously, and they always relate with employees with a "glass half full" attitude. In the face of a half glass of water, problem solvers will make an explanation or jump to a conclusion with a "half empty" attitude and feel pity for having only half a glass of water left. On the contrary, appreciative leaders will respond to that situation with a "half full" attitude and feel excited about the half a glass of water still remained. Instead of cracking employees' confidence, appreciative leaders are supposed to encourage their subordinates to move forward and pursuit excellence. Facing all sorts of difficulties in the process of organization development, appreciative leaders will actively cooperate and consult with employees to lead the organization out of a dilemma by combined wisdom and efforts. Appreciative leaders are good judges of talents when they are in the process of overcoming the obstacles against organization development with other members of the organization. In other words, they are extremely sensitive to and unbelievably capable of finding and systematically cultivating their coworkers or employees' potential strengths, which more often than not contribute to the progress and development of individuals as well as organizations.

Secondly, appreciative leaders place a priority on "relational leadership". Both the early accounts of "trait theory of leadership" and the later elaborations of "charismatic leadership" theory, maintain that the power of leadership lies solely in the individual. Nevertheless, as the appeals for participation and empowerment increase, those leadership theories that highlight the importance of individual prowess appear to be limited. In light of this, appreciative leaders no longer trace the origins of leadership to individual, but to the cooperative and interdependent "relational" ties in the organization. Visions and objectives are not arbitrary instructions from the leaders but consented efforts made by all the related members in dialogue. As has been point out by Gergen and Gergen,"the success of any organization depends significantly on the capacity of its participants to negotiate meaning effectively. Teams cease to be effective when members are in conflict; leaders cease to lead when no one understands or appreciates what they say" (Gergen & Gergen, 2004, pp. 52-53). Modern society has been witnessing the transformation from personal leadership to relational leadership. The traditional heroic leadership mode denies the fact that leadership is constructed in relationship. In contrast, generated from dialogues about role positions of leaders and leadership practices, relational leadership means "no one

can function as a leader unless joined by others in the process of making meaning" (p. 54).

Thirdly, appreciative leaders have a deep belief in the importance of "generative dialogue". Appreciative leaders value the role of dialogues in daily work, and they know what matters is the form and content of dialogues. Instead of simple instructions about how to work and how to live your life, dialogues must be open to various points of view; "in dialogue, no one will impose his view or information upon others; instead, new understandings and consensus are cooperative efforts made by concerned members" (Bohm & Nichol, 2004, p.3). Appreciative leaders value their subordinates' ability to participate in generative dialogue, and they are skilled at conceiving new metaphors and narrative stories so as to fully realize employees' values and potentials. When we make up new stories and new metaphors within a new discourse framework, we are actually changing ourselves, our organizations and the world as a whole. Dialogue, as an important mode of leadership, is generative and expanded when it permeates or is embedded in routine daily activities, such as staff meetings and corridor discussions. Both the traditional hierarchical mode of discourse and problem solving patterns are deficit orientated, which restrain the employees from bringing their enthusiasm and creativity into full play. Therefore, it is necessary, even urgent, to create a new set of conceptions, a new kind of image and a new mode of discourse to promote more positive power. As Barrett and Fry put it, "stories about how the system works at its best—and the emotional experience of connecting around these stories—seed new conversations about the highest ideals, assets, and successes that make positive actions and future collaborations even more possible and desirable. Participants are drawn to work together more toward a common anticipatory image; they seek out more conversation with each others, more ideas for positive change, more involvement from others—they generate new possibilities through new or deeper working relationships" (Barrett & Fry, 2008, p. 27).

If a problem solver is suited for the improvement of low-performing schools, then appreciative leaders are more beneficial for the cultivation and development of quality schools. Quality schools are "defined as schools that are capable of persistently fostering and reasonably exerting their capacities to improve school culture, the efficiency of school management as well as the quality of teaching staff and ultimately promote the all-round sustainable development of students" (Ma, et al., 2006, p.24). An appreciative leader is conducive to the reformation of conventional school organizations and the construction of a more generative theory of school change. Such a leader is likely to enhance the establishment of a better curriculum, cultivate a more dynamic internal management system, and bring a more supportive external environment to the development of schools. It must be pointed out that the way to cultivate quality schools, to a large extent, differs from the improving mode or

approach adopted by low-performing schools. That is to say, the effective measures taken by low-performing schools cannot guarantee their functions or efficiencies in becoming quality schools. The modes suit for the reformation and improvement of low-performing schools can hardly guarantee that they will become excellent schools, just as the medications prescribed by doctors cannot ensure health. “There are certain differences between the strategy for the improvement of low-performing schools and that for the excellence of quality schools” (Schlechty, 2012, p. 1).

As for capacity building, a principal who wants to transform from the role of a problem solver to that of an appreciative leader must cultivate his or her awareness and ability to discover the strengths and potentials of the subordinates and to handle management such as “faculty and staff, finance, materials, events and atmosphere” with a positive attitude. Sukhomlinskii once said, “The essence of education is to encourage a person to express himself on something he is interested in and to show his strength on something he is good at. To discover the good quality in ourselves——this is a noble aspiration; and how important it is that there will always be appreciative powers to support that aspiration!”(Sukhomlinskii, 2009, p.256) In normal conditions, a principal has to deal with many specific school affairs on a daily basis, which more often than not are quite sensitive. Therefore, it is admirable when a principal is able to maintain his or her positive working spirit in the face of all the troubles and pressures one might incur, and to encourage the teachers and students always with a positive attitude. If principals uphold their ambitions and carry out their work full of passion, in the face of unexpected working dilemmas, then that will be praised as a supreme professional quality.

In addition, a principal needs to improve his or her cooperative ability in working with others. Relational leadership means that effective leading behavior can only happen in the process of interaction and mutual acceptance between a leader and the subordinates. Any attempt to “work individually” will fail to achieve the expected results. For the purpose of improving cooperative ability, a principal is, first of all, required to meet the changing demands from teaching staff and the students and become a leader who puts first the needs of his or her organizational members. That’s because it is impossible for a principal who is indifferent to the changing demands of the teaching staff and the students to deeply understand the essence and beauty of education and to make progress and improvement with all the teaching staff and students. Moreover, a principal is also required to make a good principal-parent partnership. A mutual beneficial relationship based on equality and collaboration between school and family as well as community and the friendly and cooperative organization atmosphere based on mutual respect and trust can only become a reality when a principal really cares about the needs of the parents, listens to the voices of the parents, caters to the appeals from the parents and works against the detachment of

school, family and community. According to Sukhomlinskii, “if teachers have a deep understanding of the children’s mind and if all the teachers are a united whole based on shared education beliefs...what matters most is the belief that students are not passive subjects waiting to be disciplined, but positive and creative beings as well as indispensable education participants. If, after over a decade of efforts, the educational achievements benefit not only the children but also the parents, then we are pretty sure that education crises will not happen in those schools.” (Sukhomlinskii, 2009, p.132)

Moreover, a principal should strive to cultivate his or her ability to actively communicate with others. To be effective, principals should use positive and affirmative words to express personal views and opinions, patiently listen to staff conversation, be open to different views and opinions, and appreciate the power of sincere and frank communication. Facing different aspirations and work styles of faculty, a principal should employ appreciative strategies such as inquiring, inspiring, and illuminating. The attempt should be to integrate perspectives so as to realize the comprehensive value of education and teaching. Sukhomlinskii once said, “as an organizer, the value of a principal lies in his ability to modestly listen to collective opinions, to discover the beauty of the most unimpressive new things and to make a summary according to those seemingly insignificant facts” (Sukhomlinskii, 2009, p.258). As he added, “principals, vice-principals together with responsible officials of extracurricular activities all should become mediators between education science and education practice. They are supposed to disseminate scientific knowledge to a real workplace and organize and unify all the teaching staff by their creative vision and thought” (Sukhomlinskii, 1984, p.457).

Practical Explorations of Appreciative Inquiry and Appreciative Leadership

The appreciative view outlined here represents a fresh and promising perspective for the role of the principal in contemporary school systems. With the purpose of applying Appreciative Inquiry and Appreciative Leadership to specific situations in Chinese primary and secondary schools, so as to provide effective guidance for principals and promote school development and change, several research projects have been created. Under the theme of “Quality School Construction Promoted by Appreciative Inquiry and Appreciative Leadership”, a series of practical explorations led by the author together with other related personnel are carried out in selected schools of Jiangsu Province, including the Primary School Affiliated to Nanjing Xiaozhuang Normal University (hereafter referred to as Primary School Affiliated to

Xiaozhuang)[3] in Qixia District, Nanjing City and six schools[4] in Beitang District, Wuxi City.

On September 1, 2012, the cooperative project named "New Explorations on Quality Development of Primary School Affiliated to Xiaozhuang: Appreciative Inquiry-Based Perspective" was officially signed between the Institute of Educational Leadership and Management at Nanjing Normal University and Primary School Affiliated to Xiaozhuang. Nearly two years of cooperative research have witnessed Mr. Lu, principal of Primary School Affiliated to Xiaozhuang, transforming from an "Appreciative Leader" visionary into an "Appreciative Leader" practitioner.

Principal Lu's willingness to change and awareness of appreciation offer preconditions for his practicing Appreciative Leadership. Over the last two years, Principal Lu has committed himself to promoting change in the school organization and focusing on the development of organization members. Specifically, Principal Lu provides middle managers of school, especially the younger managers, with many opportunities for self-development. He does this by appreciating their efforts and contributions in school daily management, sharing with them his management experience and constantly reminding them to view the work of frontline teachers from an appreciative perspective. Additionally, he has given tremendous attention to students' potentials for development. Principal Lu specially emphasizes that the growth of each student ought to be supported with appreciation. On the basis of respecting students' potential and under the guidance of " Education for Truth" advocated by Tao Xingzhi,[5] a great educator in China's modern history, a series of campus activities under the theme of " Cartoon Images of Tao Wa" were carried out to encourage students towards progress.[6] For those students "lagging behind and

[3] Located in Qixia District of Nanjing City, Primary School Affiliated to Nanjing Xiaozhuang University is formally known as the Primary School of Xiaozhuang Normal College founded by Tao Xingzhi, a great Chinese educator. At present, Primary School Affiliated to Nanjing Xiaozhuang University is an experimental school directly under the Education Bureau of Nanjing City. The school now boasts 26 classes with 1300 students, 69 faculty and 65 full-time teachers. The current principal is Mr. Lu Zhaobin.

[4] The six schools are: Fengxiang Experimental School, Liutan Experimental School, Beishan Middle School, Huishan Primary School, Lizhuang Experimental School and Shanbei Central Primary School.

[5] Tao Xingzhi (1981-1946) is a great thinker and outstanding Chinese educator, known as People's Educator. From the early 1920s until his final days, he had advocated and implemented mass education, rural education, science education, universal education, national education and democratic education. He has founded Xiaozhuang Normal College, Shanhai Learning Group, Yucai School, etc. He has devoted his whole life into Chinese education development and has put forward unique educational philosophy like "life is education; society serves as a school; teaching, learning and doing are integrated with one another" which forms the foundation of his "life education" system.

[6] "Generally speaking, Tao Wa means the students of Tao XingZhi. There are 6 images of Tao Wa in the Primary School, designed by some students. These images represent 6 liberations, that is, the liberation of space, time, eyes, mouth, hands and brain. It means that all the students can broaden their horizons through these various means. In all, we hope students could live happily and enjoy their childhood in the school.

waiting to be guided", a theme activity, focusing on discovering and developing the strength and potential of students, named "Qing Miao (Young Crop) Project" is ongoing; these are demonstrations of appreciative educational management philosophy.

Secondly, a collaborative leadership model is being built to strengthen the interactions and cooperation among the principal, teachers and social community. It is emphasized within Appreciative Leadership that organization development is not the result of individual effort, but a process to realize organizational goals through combined efforts contributed by all the organization members. Support from a wide range of forces is needed to develop modern schools and each individual's efforts should be appreciated. In the school management practice, a distinctive collaborative leadership model has been led by Principal Lu through the cooperation among school, community, teachers and himself. For instance, in school management, Principal Lu establishes a system called "Rotating Principal", that is, as "Principal of a certain month"; a young manager or teacher is invited in rotation to assist the principal to organize and coordinate all school activities during a certain month. Meanwhile, as a practitioner of "Open the Door for Education", Principal Lu has committed himself to extending school running to society. Activities like "Tao Wa on His Way" are organized to encourage students to go out of the school to explore the outside world. For another, a Parent Committee is established to invite the parents to participate in school management, making thus cooperative leadership practice possible.

Thirdly, generative dialogue is always valued in leadership practice. Dialogue means sincere exchange and mutual appreciation between the governors and the governed; fairness and transparency of management affairs; participation and consultation in management activities; self-actualization, excellence pursuing and innovation by all the parties managed; equal relationship or atmosphere in management and with a "Harmony in Diversity"(Zhang, 2006, p.60) spirit rather than a "Uniformity in Disguise" philosophy in management practice. The principal sets a good example for faculty to value dialogue by reducing intervention in department functions and offering each department opportunities to govern and plan for itself; encouraging teachers to discuss and exchange opinions on school development and patiently listening to teachers' explanations and demands, which contributes to close cooperation among teachers and an inclusive cultural atmosphere in school. Under the guidance of Appreciative Leadership, Principal Lu changes the administrative regular meeting from a "scripted monologue by leaders" into generative dialogue among leaders and teachers. In face-to-face interaction, the thinking and creativity of every teacher is respected. This is conducive to new ideas and a path for quality school construction.

Lastly, the strengths of all the faculty members and students are given full

display through relevant platform and system construction. As an advocator of "Providing Life-Long Benefit Quality Education For all the Teachers and Students" proposed by Tao Xingzhi, Principal Lu has been trying to create opportunities for all the teachers and students to fully display their advantages. Using projects as carriers, "Project Management" integrates and allocates all sorts of resources for improved use, transforming the previous single vertical management model into an efficient school management network; "Star Card", a student evaluation system which is used to reward students with an honorary star for their good behavior and other positive qualities, has been established, changing the previous score-oriented student evaluation system into a multi-evaluation system.

The practical explorations of Appreciative Inquiry and Appreciative Leadership are not limited in one school, but deepen into a certain area. The cooperative project named "Quality School Construction" between the Institute of Educational Leadership and Management at Nanjing Normal University and the Education Bureau of Beitang District, Wuxi City is one of the typical examples. In this three-year research project, that is, from February 2014 to January 2017, six experimental schools in Beitang District are chosen to be assisted in a series of team building training for school administrators, head teachers and backbone teachers to promote the proficiency, ability and level of school development. This project is expected to bring changes to school spirit, a management and leadership model and teaching approach; improved education quality and enhanced parents' and students' satisfaction. The distinctive features of this regional change project under the guidance of Appreciative Inquiry and Appreciative Leadership are as follows:

In terms of implementing this project, the steps are very clear. We start with pilot schools in a certain area and slowly spiral outward to a wider area. We move from small districts to a large-scale area, expanding year by year. A quality school construction project in Beitang District, featuring Appreciative Inquiry, will soon begin with six pilot schools and subsequently expand to schools in the whole area. For each one of the schools in the project, its administrators will be trained first, and then the training will gradually expand to head teachers and backbone teachers.

Some principles generalized as "learning while researching, constructing while summarizing" need to follow so as to cultivate the learning and research abilities of school and accumulate constructive experience to enhance the project quality. The project will last three years and each year has its own theme, that is, leadership development for administrators; class management ability cultivation for head teachers and teaching management ability development for backbone teachers respectively. In line with 4D cycle of Appreciative Inquiry, the implementing procedure of each year can be divided into four stages: Discovery Phrase; Dream Phrase; Design Phrase and Destiny Phrase. During each phase, eight different tasks

and at least four seminars are arranged.

In terms of implementation, this project includes abundant activities such as Theme Report, Group Discussion, One-on-one Tutoring, Brainstorming, Reading Salon, Strength Exploration, Achievement Demonstrations, and Case Studies. One or more forms of activities are adopted in each seminar. To illustrate, in the Strength Exploration activity, the tutor will help the participants to explore the potentials and strengths hidden within the individual and the organization so as to accumulate more positive power/energy for individual development and school change. Based on the requirements of participants, in the Theme Report activity, the steering team from Nanjing Normal University will offer lectures on the core concept and main idea of Appreciative Inquiry. In the Achievements Demonstration activity, participants are invited to make plans and complete certain tasks for the future development of individuals and the school through their creativity and imagination. Through displaying achievements, school members are expected to deepen their mutual understanding and share their vision of school development. In Group Discussion, group members will gain a better understanding of the project and Appreciative Inquiry.

In terms of the participants in project implementation, Nanjing Normal University, the Education Bureau of Beitang District and the pilot schools constitute a "community of practice" where voices on all sides are given expression. Whether in group discussion or in blog sharing, university teachers, members of the education bureau, and administrators from pilot schools are equally welcome to share their thoughts on daily school life with a totally unbiased and appreciative attitude. A case in point is the diverse understanding of "Appreciation"; for some administrators, appreciation is regarded as a kind of positive power, "You may see a whole world by appreciating one flower and feel honorable spirit by appreciating one blade of grass. Appreciation has unlimited power... Appreciation is a sincere compliment for beauty from a touched heart, always pleasant to hear. Praise embodies affirmation from a superior while appreciation shows admiration in equality."(Zhu, 2014) For others, "Appreciation" is always associated with "criticism". In their eyes, "appreciation is not compromise or indulgence without principle. Children need sensible criticism to guide them to a right direction or help they set proper goals. Appreciation is not magic but a long process, requiring our great patience and love. Relaxation and a happy growth environment is essential for children. How to make a balance between proper criticism and appreciation is what we need to reflect on."(Zhang, 2014) Using a "rational window" as a metaphor, some administrators believe that "Appreciative Inquiry is a window that offers us the opportunity to review the problems occurred in the process of school development, class management and student growth from a social constructionist perspective. Problem solving is necessary, yet not our only

objective. Children's voices and demands need to be listened to and met with, which require corresponding changes in their education."(Liu, 2014)

In terms of the depth of implementation, this project provides the participants with a full space to develop themselves and awaken their self-awareness. Conceptual change is the key to education change. This project has witnessed the tremendous growth of administrators, principals and directors of education bureau in their appreciative-oriented self-awareness. Some of the directors of the education bureau begin to reflect on Appreciative Inquiry, "We are not expecting instant effects of Appreciative Inquiry learning practices In other words, we may constantly remind ourselves to appreciate others, but it's hard for us to put that into action immediately. Appreciation is the outburst of a subconscious rooted deep in our soul, just as the fragrance of culture permeated the air. Appreciation is good character waiting to be nurtured by sincerity, honesty and enthusiasm" (Xu, 2014).

Under the guidance of Appreciative Inquiry, some middle-level administrators have come to renew their understanding of the relationship between themselves and others; they believe "appreciation is more about self-improvement than strength affirming to others, often claimed by someone as "I appreciate you for my own sake". To some teachers who have a real understanding of appreciation, appreciation is a kind of self-experience, independent of other people or other objects, which is a great happiness to them. I strongly believe that appreciation is the power for self-improvement, residing deep in our soul and based on respect for other people and for other objects." According to a middle-level administrator from one of the research schools, "appreciation based on respect and understanding is beneficial for daily school management. Once organization members feel this kind of appreciation, they will take it as expectation or concern from superiors even if they are under criticism, and they are willing to respond to this affirmation or trust with better behaviors or attitude, which in a way contributes to the establishment of a good and generative leader-member relationship. Our school will be a quality school and our teachers will feel blessed when all the administrators are willing to change themselves into appreciative leaders" (Jiang, 2014).

The administrators and leaders in target schools have developed their own thoughts and approaches for change. Some administrators have adopted new thoughts for change after several project activities, which strongly suggests the growth of leaders under the guidance of Appreciative Leadership. "We will take actions strictly in line with the guidance and procedure offered by experts on quality school construction; that's what we thought at the very beginning. However, with the deepening of the research project, it has come to us that our previous thought is wrong. The expert team is useful for our theoretical guidance, but in quality school construction, they are participants as well. We will apply Appreciative Inquiry to

school management practice and make Appreciative Inquiry oriented quality school construction plans through the combined efforts of ourselves with the expert team. The whole management team has set clear goals for school development, and under the guidance of the expert team and upon reflection, we will mainly rely on ourselves to bring school development to a new level" (Yan, 2014).

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Culture Change in Educational Contexts

Susan Kay Mossman Riva

This chapter presents a case study about multi-handicapped children with hearing disabilities in a special education day-care center in Lausanne, Switzerland, welcoming children from 0-4 years of age. An audit of the day-care center was initiated when a parent questioned the care offered to her child during lunchtime. The mother was concerned about the feeding position of her child and the risks of choking. The day-care center has been confronted with an increase of multi-handicapped children that have needs differing from the hearing impaired children they traditionally welcomed. Though the center has traditionally offered "state of the art" special education for hearing-impaired children and children with cochlear implants, it has been challenged to create state of the art practice regarding multi-handicapped children with such characteristics. The audit provided a dialogical space generating professional narratives that facilitated the reconfiguration of the social and healthcare network and produced a charter to guide the future course of the institution.

This case study illustrates a relevant problematic demonstrating how social constructionist approaches in educational contexts can offer useful and innovative methods, improving care outcomes in the first years of life. The complex situations that professionals face in special education settings call for transformative practices that generate collaborative pathways, focusing on how to go forward together rather than simply implementing traditional forms of assessment. When interdisciplinary teams face caring for multi-handicapped children, they must reinforce collaborative continuums, weaving together strong networks of support for children and families. The valuable social capital inherent in these settings provides a form of social solidarity capable of orienting families through the labyrinth of educational and therapeutic approaches. Parents of special needs children are therefore guided as they navigate the landscapes of educational and therapeutic possibilities. Each family that participates in the program offered at the school for the hearing impaired children must make choices about cochlear implants, sign language, oralist approaches and Deaf culture.

Multiple handicapped children pose complex challenges, creating new worlds where previously unforeseen opportunities arise from medical technological advancements and experiential special educational approaches. The center favors the inclusion of special needs children and considers them first as pupils in an educational environment rather than focusing on the medical aspects of their care. The special education teachers develop tailored educational approaches for each child within the learning structure. This educationally oriented approach favors creative learning for all. Instead of focusing on the physical handicap and the child's identity as a patient, receiving therapy and specialized care, the child is seen as a learner and is first and foremost a pupil.

As parents and children's expectations change, aspiring to a more inclusive social belonging in educational settings and society, professional practices are challenged. For the hearing impaired educators at the school, their Deaf culture is also challenged, as they are obliged to integrate new communicational models. This case study illustrates culture change in an educational context.

Using professional's narratives in a day-care center for hearing impaired children within the context of the audit, ultimately revealed parent's voices concerning the burden of care that they shoulder. The parents of multi-handicapped children, who were born prematurely, spoke out about their difficulties assuming their children's special needs during their meetings with the therapists and special education teachers. During the audit, these conversations surfaced. Trusting the transformative process, allowed for unexpected ethical questions to emerge, orienting the future consolidation of collaborative continuums. That is to say, question of relationally connected care joining medical doctors, therapists, and special education teachers in a coordinated effort to offer support for parents and specialized education and therapy for their special needs children were voiced. As the professional relations were reinforced within the matrix of the different fields of practice, more formal institutional collaborations were elicited and clarified between the canton's departmental heads. The reflexive space snowballed, creating an interest to organize a major conference on multi-handicapped children's rights, education, and care, with the participation of the International Institute for the Right's of the Child at the University Institute Kurt Bösch.

The intervention was initiated because the special education institution was facing a relational crisis. The teachers, therapists, and educators within the day-care center that is part of the school for the hearing impaired were demoralized and frustrated. Their relationship with several parents had become tense. They asked for more support from their director and inspector as well the possibility to hire more professionals to better meet the children's needs within the center. They clarified their needs in a written document before the beginning of the upcoming school year, knowing that there would be an increase in multi-handicapped children that require a great deal of attention and care. The professional team felt that their demand for increased resources had not been sufficiently considered by the director. They believed they had tried to anticipate the resources needed and that the department had not adequately met their demand.

When the relations between the parents and professional team became noticeably strained and after considering their requests, the director of the school sought the aid of an external consultant. He asked for assistance from an outsider to provide a more neutral perspective. He judged that a consultant was better positioned to resolve the ensuing conflicts between the mother of a multi-handicapped infant and the therapists working with her child, tainting the organization with a systemic reach across the porous interfaces configuring the institution.

The conflictual situation that had been wearing on the professional team for several months elicited an even larger examination of the relational context. The conflict allowed the educational and therapeutic teams a reflexive space to assess their relations and practices. As the team sought to find solutions they became aware of a systemic dysfunction that rippled out beyond the initial situation involving the mother of a multi-handicapped child, creating waves of discontent throughout the entire day-care structure, the school for the hearing

impaired, and the special education department heads. The reflexive process that was ultimately initiated enabled the school for the hearing impaired to clarify their practices and improve their relationships within their institution and within the larger regional, social and healthcare network. Ultimately, the multi-disciplinary teams, institutional and department heads, as well as the medical professionals all came together in a joint collaborative effort to improve educational, therapeutic and care outcomes for the children at the day-care center.

Creating dialogical space within social and healthcare networks, while promoting participatory practices has been the focus of my work. I began as a mediator on an accident site, performing mediation in an intercultural context. I then designed a mediation service, offering conflict resolution and health-care prevention services to political asylum seekers. My recent work conducting needs assessment for public health reports has allowed me to integrate the perceptions of professionals into healthcare planning, thereby informing decision-makers. This consulting job allowed me to facilitate conflict resolution between families of multiple-handicapped children and interdisciplinary teams, transforming care delivery by developing and implementing collaborative practice pathways.

To do so, I created a multi-faceted tool-kit allowing for a flexible action-research posture, improvising interventions by responding to the specific needs expressed within the context of the interviews and meetings. I facilitated the emergence of a shared vision of institutional roles and practices, including how to better handle critical, conflictual situations with parents pertaining to care issues. Using professional and user perceptions for needs assessment and appreciative inquiry allowed me to integrate traditionally unheard voices into social and healthcare narratives. My work underscores how social issues and medical technologies transform patient and pupil care, creating the need for new approaches that can foster higher levels of coherency within the collaborative continuum.

This problematic demonstrates how assemblages of methods can generate transformation when responding to conflicts in special education settings where interdisciplinary teams must find ways to care for multi-handicapped children. This case study presents the conflict management process that combined mediation, needs assessment, and social change work, accompanying professionals and facilitating the creation of collaborative pathways in special education and healthcare delivery. Instead of proposing a traditional audit to evaluate the institutional setting, an “e-valuation” approach, aiming to validate best practices, while generating new possibilities, was implemented. “E-valuation” refers to valuing together rather than judging from a hierarchical position of knowing what is best. The social change process was initiated with the support of the head of the special education department and the director of the school for the hearing impaired, who mutually mandated the consultant. Though the process incorporated conflict resolution practices, it was presented as a form of action-research, based on the professionals’ perceptions of needs. The questioning phase drew upon appreciative inquiry, asking the participants to speak not only about their challenges, but to include discussions about the more positive aspects of their work and their ideas of how to improve their practices and institution globally. A multi-level strategy emerged offering a new landscape of meaning, outlining a long-term vision of institutional governance with collaborative pathways designed to better meet user needs, and a charter guiding the legacy of inclusion; an ethical way to go forward together.

A Description of the Institutional Setting

The school for hearing impaired children in Lausanne Switzerland provides a setting for hearing impaired and multiple-handicapped children. A day-care for special needs children shares the same premises and is under the management of the director of the school for the hearing impaired and the special education department in the Canton of Vaud. The legislature provides for the inclusion of hearing impaired and multiple-handicapped children within the day-care setting. Children from 0-4 and their parents have access to special education services designed to meet their specific needs. The day-care and school are inclusive environments. The institution welcomes infants, providing resources that will hopefully allow the special needs children to integrate the public school system, avoiding institutionalization.

The cantonal school for the deaf in French is called, "L'École Cantonale pour enfants sourds" (ECES). It shares a large L shaped building with a high school in Lausanne. On one side of the building there is an entrance to the day-care center. On the other side of the building, there is the school for the hearing impaired that offers special education classes to the older hearing-impaired children that are integrated within the corresponding schools for their age group. They receive additional support from specialized educators, the majority of whom are deaf. Before the decision to integrate the hearing-impaired children within an inclusive school program, the school for the deaf welcomed deaf children from around the canton of Vaud. Their entire education was within the walls of their specialized institution. Also, there was little hope of finding employment beyond workshops designed to give employment to the deaf. An inclusive approach has changed outcomes, allowing hearing impaired children to follow high school programs, receive higher educational diplomas, and even continue their studies at the university level.

Medical and technical innovations can transform care, educational services and educational practices rapidly, provoking institutional changes. In the case of cochlear implants for hearing-impaired children, the availability and success of implants has required adaptations in care and educational services within interdisciplinary teams. The special education department in Vaud, Switzerland has adopted a bi-lingual approach. The co-existence of both oral and sign languages provides an accepting environment during this transitional phase where children with and without implants learn to communicate together.

The challenges that the interdisciplinary team encountered include changing practices due to medical and technical advancements. Cochlear implants have effectively allowed children that were once hearing impaired to hear. Children with implants develop their communication skills differently than children without implants. Furthermore, children with multiple handicaps are included in the learning environment that provides day care services beginning in early childhood. The speech therapists, psychologists, special education teachers, hearing impaired educators, and unqualified assistants work together, receiving children and families who are faced with special needs.

The delicate transition from the home environment to the institutional day-care setting can elicit strong reactions, as parents must share caring for their special needs children with professionals. Challenges arise when multi-handicapped infants must be fed in the institutional environment presenting risk situations that the professionals perceive to be beyond their skill set and coping capacity. The changing institutional landscape created a conjunction where assemblages of care beckoned an assemblage of methods to accompany

the institution in a change work process within the context of an appreciative evaluation (2006, pp 211-224).

Prior to the initiation of the change work process, a new itinerant early childhood special education service was created. I had participated by supervising the special education teachers during the conceptualization phase. The itinerant early childhood special education services offered an accompaniment for day-care centers throughout the canton, working to include special needs children. This new offer of services sought to encourage the inclusion of special needs children as early as possible in day-care centers. The special education department's goal was to avoid creating a learning gap for special needs children. From the very start, the department promoted the inclusion of special needs children and their parents. These early childhood learners could therefore benefit from the social capital of the center, as well as an itinerant early childhood special education service. In this way, the know-how developed within the ECES could be shared throughout the entire network of day-care centers (Cuni-Risse et al., 2014).

During the audit, the director of the ECES attended a conference in Paris, France at the Robert Laplane National Resource Center for Rare Handicaps with a large part of the school's team of therapists. This allowed for a rich exchange of experiences. It also permitted the director and therapists to realize that similar institutions were facing the same challenges. Following the evaluative phase, the director of the day-care and school ECES attended two conferences, presenting the evaluation, recommendations, and charter. The first presentation was at the Comenius Association with the European Network of teacher training institutions in October 2014 (Biner, Hoefflin, & Riva, 2014). The second international conference was at Vanderbilt University in Nashville Tennessee at the 14th Symposium on Cochlear Implants in December 2014 (Hoefflin et al., 2014). The process was truly experiential, relying less on relevant literature and more on participative academic exchanges.

Needs Assessment Process

This Needs Assessment process drew upon my background experience, skills, and theoretical templates in medical anthropology, social psychology, and mediation. My European Master's Degree in Mediation was co-written with the head of the special education department in the canton of Valais who later became the head of the special education department in the canton of Vaud. We had written about the inclusion of special needs children and the development of a culture of mediation within the school system. Our work put forward a vision of inclusion where the special needs child became an important mediator within the classroom, teaching other classmates to learn to be at ease with difference simply by being allowed to be present. Our research also supported inclusion as an important political and social choice. Instead of transferring children labeled as different into institutional environments, we made a case for including them and bringing in resources to their classrooms so to enhance learning for the entire class while assuring needed education resources and therapists to specifically support the special needs child. Our position, we believed, fostered an acceptance of difference and a relational mediation designed to be a social blueprint for inclusion (Nendaz & Riva, 2000).

My past work with the special education department provided me with a solid theoretical background. My studies combined with my practical experience on the local school board, in charge of visiting the special education classroom and following-up on the children in that class, reporting to the political head of the town's school board, prepared me to enter into relationship with the interdisciplinary teams at the ECES. However, the position that I had taken in my master's thesis was pro-inclusion, and therefore not in anyway neutral.

As a mediator for political asylum seekers I had numerous cases where translators were necessary to facilitate the mediation process. While interviewing the hearing impaired educators at the ECES, a translator was present, aiding the communication process. Again, I was familiar with working with third party translators. The mind-maps were a form of visual representation of the dialogues, aiding in the communication process, representing the major themes with drawings, forms, and colors, highlighting the emerging landscape of meaning that was coming into view with an invigorating greenness resembling the color of new grass sprouting up in spring.

I facilitated the emergence of a shared vision of institutional roles and practices, including how to better handle critical, conflictual situations with parents pertaining to care issues. This case study underscores how medical technologies transform care, creating the need for new approaches that can foster higher levels of coherency within the collaborative continuum. Both user and professional perceptions configure the complex social field matrix that unites caregivers and care receivers.

Between November 2013 and April 2014 a Needs Assessment was initiated in response to the Special Education Department's request to audit a day-care center that specializes in caring for hearing impaired children. Over the last four years there has been a significant increase in the number of multi-handicapped children within the institution. This increase is due to evolving medical technology in the field of Neuropediatrics. There has been an increase in the rate of comorbidities with advancements in neonatology. Premature children are found to exhibit profound hearing disabilities associated with overall developmental impairments (Nasralla et al., 2014, p.360).

The university medical center in Lausanne, Switzerland has developed medical care for premature infants, in some cases only 24 weeks old, enabling these babies to survive at birth. This specialized unit is headed by a neuropediatrician. Improved medical technologies have pushed earlier the gestational age at which premature babies are considered viable, causing increased survival rates for the tiniest of babies. Many of these premature infants have special needs that require interdisciplinary approaches integrating therapy, special education, and care.

The traditional social, educational and healthcare networks supporting the hearing impaired children at the canton's school for the hearing impaired, and the day-care facility connected to the specialized institution, have been increasingly challenged by the rising number of hearing impaired infants that suffer from multiple handicaps. The doctors responsible for the cochlear implants had been working with the speech therapists, occupational therapists, psychologists, special education teachers, and hearing impaired educators over the years. This social, educational and healthcare network had been formalized. The school's director supervised the formal inter-institutional collaborations. The caregivers, educators, and special education teachers in the interdisciplinary teams assured the

well-being and inclusion of the special needs children within the canton's educational system. In response to the arrival of the infants with multiple handicaps and their subsequent needs associated with their specific handicaps new skills were acquired, new practices were developed, and new networks were created. Though the school's director and therapists worked closely within a formal network with the specialized doctors responsible for the implants and their ongoing surveillance and monitoring, the collaborations with the neuropediatric specialist were more recent and less formalized. A pediatrician from the University Hospital at the CHUV was also consulted for the medical dimension of the audit solidifying an ongoing collaboration and medical supervision with the specialized nurse in his service that reaches out to institutions and schools responsible for handicapped children.

These multi-handicapped infants and children require more care because of their difficulties swallowing after being tube-fed for long periods of time. Some children also require speech therapy. Still others will require a gastronomy tube or PEG for feeding. The complexity of care for these multi-handicapped children has created tensions that were previously not experienced within the institution.

The request for an audit of the institution came about after a conflictual situation arose between a parent and the therapeutic team over feeding approaches and positions. The conflict elicited a reflexive response, leading to the audit of the institution. The head of the special education department, the inspector, and the director of the school for the hearing impaired, agreed to mandate my services as a consultant. My job was to aid them by analyzing their institutional practices, assessing needs. A medical team was also mandated to analyze the medical needs within the day-care center during the same period (Grol et al., 2005).

Methodological Alchemy

I developed a Needs Assessment research approach, under the supervision of Raymond Massé, while working on public health research in Switzerland. Massé's work underscores how appropriate research methods, when properly carried out, contribute to the reinforcement of ethical principles pertaining to research findings (Massé, 2003). My experience during that mental health research project allowed me to understand how the researcher's approach to questioning had the potential of eliciting a reflexive response. The professionals I spoke with were able to share what they valued in their work and even imagine new connections in the network that might enhance cooperation. I had gone on to use this method in two public health reports addressing immigrant health and LGBT health following the mental health report. My experience as a researcher had taught me how to generate change within our regional social and healthcare networks. The validation sessions that were organized following the reports' conclusion had successfully reinforced the generative potential of the research project, allowing for even more dialogical space to be created. The professional narratives were collected and analyzed. Voices were brought together in a participative endeavor to inform public health decision-makers in our region. Following the publication of the reports, the public health department implemented the majority of the recommendations. The research was presented at national public health meetings and conferences, allowing for the sharing of findings and the development of national and regional action plans.

I used my experience as a mediator doing conflict resolution and a researcher using needs assessment to design an appreciative evaluation. Instead of focusing on the difficulties

that the interdisciplinary special education team was facing, I wanted to use the interviews or questioning space to give value to the good practices that were identified as well as the aspirations that the center had to better respond to the children and families' needs. In response to the department's request, I oriented the audit towards an e-valuation, that is to say, a method that would identify practices and protocols that the professionals themselves, identified as valuable. I suggested a relational alternative to assessing the practices within the special education setting, fostering a participative evaluation process. Assemblages of methods broaden the consultant's toolbox, allowing a multi-faceted e-valuation to generate collaborative pathways. The life-course trajectory of children with special needs becomes a more coherent collaborative continuum when professional networks are reinforced by the implementation of innovative social processes valuing appreciative inquiry (Riva-Mossman, 2014).

Changing the Culture of Assessment and Inquiry

The way of writing "e-valuation" brings into focus valuing as opposed to judging. Separating the "e" from "valuation" gives new meaning to evaluation by offering a fresh regard in relation to assessment. I learned about this approach as a doctoral student with the Taos Institute during a seminar in Utrecht, The Netherlands with Sheila McNamee and Dian Marie Hosking. After having read about Appreciative Inquiry, a social constructionist approach to inquiry, I was able to better understand how it could be applied in different contexts through my workshop experience. My initial encounter with the social constructionist approaches enkindled an awareness of the transformational potential of Appreciative Inquiry. As a mediator, I had tried to collapse the hierarchy, allowing the participants to design their conflict resolution agreements. As a researcher, I found in Appreciative Inquiry a way to share the power of valuing with the participants, intentionally proposing to orchestrate the process without assuming a position of higher knowing that expert knowledge often implies.

I included what I had learned with Sheila McNamee and Dian Marie Hosking in my medical anthropology research. After receiving my doctorate from Tilburg University, I made a professional transition from mediator to researcher. During my many interviews with professionals in social and healthcare networks in my region, I used conversations to open up desired future outcomes. I witnessed how my intent as a researcher to integrate a social constructionist posture, appeared to contribute to the interviewees level of coherency, compelling them to envision a promising way to go forward with practitioners within our regional network. This Appreciative Inquiry approach seemed to reinforce the quality of the dialogical space, allowing a higher level of mutual understanding to be reached. It also allowed the participants to feel empowered by the research method and process that validated their narratives, formulating recommendations envisioned during the inquiry process. The process allowed the participants to espouse the salient findings and actions to be taken. My consultant's posture seemed to enhance the participants' openness and willingness to actively co-construct a vision of practice and collaboration that they would like to make happen in their work environment. It also reinforced an institutional landscape of meaning, by presenting the mind maps that outlined the vision within the different group meetings.

A Relational Constructionist Approach

Convinced that these methods fostered conflict and organizational transformation, I outlined the phases of inquiry in a proposal to the head of the school for the hearing impaired and the head of the special education department. My method design sought to use traditional Needs Assessment research while facilitating organizational transformation, using a relational constructionist approach. In their book, Research and Social Change, the authors explain, "Evaluation practices become participatory moments of constructing relational realities; what is valued is reconstructed in process" (McNamee & Hosking, 2012, p. 81).

I proposed to first meet with the department heads to understand their needs. Then, I would interview the group of therapists and educators and offer a feedback session. The relational constructionist approach proposes a process of joining with others in a coordination of practices. As practitioners are allowed to speak about their work, they become more aware of the collaborative relations they participate in with other professionals. This realization shifts the focus from their individual contribution to the collaborative continuum that takes form. The collaborative pathways arise from the deep discussions where participants describe their practices, relating their work to the larger care network.

I carefully listened to the language that the department heads used to describe the situation at hand. As I took notes I observed how they talked with the school inspector, explaining the context and illustrating the different facets of the conflict that was preoccupying them. McNamee and Hosking note that, "relational constructionism does not imply that the practice of evaluation is wrong or bad. Rather, it invites us to pay attention to the relational practices we engage in when we enter this language game" (McNamee & Hosking, 2012, p. 81). They propose that appreciative evaluation is a way of doing evaluation "with" others as opposed to doing evaluation "of" others. During the first meeting, I began "with" the group that was bringing me into their setting.

Integrating The Narrative Model of Mediation

I also drew upon my experience as a mediator, embedded in the narrative model of mediation that grew from Michael White Narrative practice approach (White, 2007). Michael White and David Epston's Narrative Therapy approach challenging structures of power by including narratives in the meaning-making process (White & Epston, 1990). John Winslade and Gerald Monk developed the narrative model of mediation that provides a conceptual framework focusing on the transformative and generative potential in conflict resolution practice as collaborative conversations are elicited by the mediator. Their narrative counseling in schools provides an important reference for applying narrative mediation practices in educational setting (Winslade & Monk, 2007). Each professional group within the organizational hierarchy shares perceptions of belonging and often a kind of entitlement. As a facilitator, I tried to bridge the perceptions, working on that in-between relational space. There is also a meaning landscape that is like a painting in a gallery; each visitor perceives a different scene. This is especially true when looking at modern art and postmodern relating. I met with the different groups of professionals sharing perceptions of the organizational and relational landscape, which ultimately allowed them all to look at the different landscapes with more insight. In this context, the dialogical space that was opened within the social field

or matrix configured a new landscape of meaning where collaborative pathways emerged, and subsequently new protocols were conceived and designed to better respond to user needs.

When social change processes are initiated serendipitous events occur (Caetllin, 2014). These happenings become an integral part of the organizational learning process. The inclusion of marginalized voices within the institutional and organizational narrative can challenge traditional power structures. The Narrative Model in mediation allows us to take into consideration themes developed by Michel Foucault concerning power and knowledge. White and Epston say that, "power is constitutive or shaping of persons' lives" (White & Epston, p.19). When knowledge freely circulates through organizational and social matrixes, the hierarchical pyramid is challenged. There may be a resistance to the new relational configurations that emerge. The notions of power developed by Michel Foucault are embedded within the foundations of the Narrative Model in Mediation. This theoretical stance allows practitioners to question power and authority in a useful way.

In this case study, the process gave rise to a protocol including parents in the decisional process by designing protocols that ask parents about appropriate care practices like feeding habits and even medication. A special book was designed to include specific information about each child. The charter that was finally outlined even has the goal of integrating a parent association member into the governance process. These solutions allow parents to participate in the decisional process. Mediation in relation to special education exists in states like Nebraska, that have written legislation including mediation specifically designed to address conflict resolution in special education settings. The legislation offers mediation when parents and teachers do not agree on the individual learning program specifically tailored to the child's learning needs.

Creating procedures that allow parents and users to enter more effectively into the decisional process are being developed in collaborative medical practices also. Professor Glyn Elwyn at The Dartmouth Center for Health Care Delivery Science is doing research implementing shared decision-making. In this case study, the child's special book was designed to have all the pertinent information pertaining to medication, feeding, and precisions about appropriate care. When the therapists fill out the forms with the corresponding information in collaboration with the parents, they are actively including them in the decisions concerning care delivery. The child's book mediates the relations between the family and the special education institution. The book prevents conflict surrounding care issues and also stipulates how medication should be given, in an attempt to avoid associated medical complications. These joint decision-making tools also lead to shared responsibility surrounding practices and risks that for example are inherent in feeding children that could possibly choke. This shared responsibility allows the professional team to feel more secure, knowing that they have implemented the proper protocol in accordance with medical experts and parents.

The research consultant not only proposes collaborative pathways, but also becomes an intricate part of the social change process. Findings and recommendations must be accompanied by change work in order to allow the learning organization the reflexive space necessary to integrate the new social field cartography. This kind of approach can be a threat to certain people within the system. The departmental leaders play a crucial role in supporting a vision of participative governance. Institutional directors must decide to sustain the social

change process with adequate resources. Otherwise, the new "in-formation" cannot take form. To assure long-term organizational transformation, leadership must be dedicated to the fundamental values inherent within the social constructionist approach.

Creating Dialogical Space

The director of the school contacted me in October 2013, asking for my services. I created a concept that detailed the different phases of the intervention. First, I met with the school director, head of the department, and inspector, taking notes of their perceptions of the problem. Then, I was asked to join them as they met with the interdisciplinary team of therapists and special education teachers that had been directly involved with the families and children in the day-care center. I was introduced to the team and wrote down their perceptions during that first encounter. I was careful to document the conversations in my notebook so that I would be able to follow the phases of the ever-transforming institutional narrative.

Following that first meeting, I scheduled a series of one-hour interviews with the eight therapists and teachers. I used a semi-structured questionnaire asking what the professional's needs where, what the children and families' needs where, and how they thought that their working environment could be improved. During those interviews, I recorded our conversations, as a back-up. After analyzing the interviews, I used a mind-mapping technique to present my analysis to the team before giving my feedback to the school's director (Buzan, 2002). Mind mapping consists of drawing or mapping out on paper the representations that spring from the interview content. In this case, I used a flip chart to re-draw what I had drawn on a smaller sheet for myself. Instead of writing recommendations for the director, I made shapes, connecting them with ideas, all along using different colors to underscore the emerging pathways.

After completing the first phase of interviews, I decided that I should also interview the hearing impaired educators and their coordinator (who is not hearing impaired). The coordinator set up a series of five interviews with a translator, as the educators used sign language to communicate with me. Again, I used a mind mapping technique to represent my analysis of the interviews during a feedback session with the team of educators. I also informed the school's director, sharing and commenting the mind-map I had presented to the group. This form of communication allowed the director to fill in the spaces of the mind-map with his own perceptions, creating even more potential for change.

The interviews created a dialogical space, allowing the professionals to attain a higher level of coherence by eliciting in-depth descriptions of their practices and collaborations. The process also allowed the professionals to envision new relational possibilities within their teams and with the different networks supporting the institution. During the feedback sessions the mind-maps that I drew on the flip charts, and recopied for the director of the school, allowed for even more dialogical space to be created between the team members who were encouraged to brainstorm and discuss the findings I presented. Mind maps were used to show the evolving organizational cartography. They enhanced the communicational process with a more visual language that the hearing impaired professionals could relate to.

This is yet another way action-research can be used in the field in conjunction with social constructionist practice. The feedback session reinforced the group's understanding of their organization's mission, fostering discussions that co-created a common landscape of

meaning. The drawings on the flip chart aided the communicational and relational process. Mind maps have open space that can be filled in participant's comments and perceptions. They allow for another cognitive response that elicits participation instead of suggesting expert conclusions in a written form. At the same time, the professionals were allowed to express their concerns and vent their emotions. I became the "ear" of the director with the goal of improving the institution's practices, collaborations, and governance.

Following the feedback sessions, a report was given to the head of the special education department, the inspector, and the director. The head of the department and the inspector were not given specific information pertaining to the interviews and the mind-mapping sessions. Only the director had knowledge of those conversations through the mind-mapping analysis. In this way, I sought to protect the confidential information shared during the interviews. The report presented the findings, focusing on a course of action that defined a series of processes that would enhance future forms of collaboration, designed to resolve the conflicts that were present within the institutional setting and improve care.

When the report was presented, it opened up dialogical space, allowing the head of the department, inspector and director to have a communicational and relational cartography of the institution and the needs that had been perceived by the professionals. It also gave them the opportunity to participate in an "e-valuation" that was piloted by a consultant. They were no longer leading the process, but were fellow participators in the process. The conversations, the mind-maps and feed back session, as well as the underlining social constructionist philosophy all contributed to the processes' multi-layered attempt to include the professionals.

Often group leaders do not have the time to spend hours listening to their team-workers. I was allowed to spend hours in conversations with the different professionals working in the special education setting. I became the institutional "ear". I used deep listening to "h-ear" the voices expression. Sharing what I heard with the director and head of the department, I mediated a new organizational narrative. I was allowed to ask questions, speak openly with professional teams, and present an organizational narrative to the entire group. The reflexive space that was created through the audit generated a potential for organizational transformation by valuing the perceptions communicated through the interviewing process as well as the visual representations or mind maps that were commented during the group feed-back sessions. The mind-maps elicit participants to fill in the open spaces. They allow the group to see the "big picture" taking form.

The organizational processes that I outlined sought to enhance collaborative practices that would address the lines of contention within the institution by focusing on the potential inherent within the organizational co-ordinations, in contrast to diagnosing existing pathologies. This approach seemed to be coherent with their professional postures and values. The audit became an appreciative evaluation through my choice of methods, my background, and my tool-kit.

The final document outlining the processes that might be implemented to meet the institutional challenges and user's needs was presented at a meeting including all the team members. The medical audit was presented at the same time. The outcomes of the two reports came together in a coordinated, interdisciplinary space.

In this way, meaning was co-constructed with different professional postures and languages. Everyone heard the same presentations, allowing a coherent landscape of meaning

to be generated in an evolving institutional narrative. The final meeting allowed for a form of group performance to enhance the transformational potential of the two audits. There was a translator present during the meeting, allowing the hearing impaired educators to participate in the presentation and conversations. New questions emerged during the meeting that added to the reflexive process.

The director used the original document to draft guidelines, outlining the recommendations for departmental change. This official document was sent out to all the teams that were involved in the school for the hearing impaired and the day care facility. An article was published in the special education journal detailing the process, integrating the official propositions accepted by the head of the special education department and the director of the school for the hearing impaired children. Dialogical space was enhanced by sharing the methods and phases of the process in a description, allowing other professionals in special education to learn from the audit or "e-valuation" experience. This narrative of an appreciative evaluation, served as a tool to demonstrate new forms of governance within Switzerland's professional practice of special education.

The dialogical space within the institution generated presentations in academic settings and the publication of an article in the French-speaking special education journal, giving the participants an added form of recognition for their work. Each form of communication enhanced the growing organizational coherency. The landscape of meaning that arose from the interviews was shared with other colleagues. The institution introduced joint implementation, bringing a deep feeling of satisfaction to the teams that had previously been anxious about the challenges that they faced. The public awareness of the transformative process they participated in brought them a recognition that enabled them to consolidate their teamwork.

Each of phases described above, shows how dialogical space expands, reaching out from the original conversations with the professionals to public space in scientific conferences and scientific journals. This expansion is partly fueled by the researcher's intention to continually sustain the investigative process, supporting the social change process throughout the unfolding phases. The dynamic movement transforms the larger learning organization that not only includes professional networks, but also public education and general public knowledge concerning public health. The process engenders an ongoing social inquiry about public health practices.

Paradigm Change

A major paradigm change, reinforced by advances in medical technologies, engendering new aspirations, goals and institutional practices, has had a direct influence on the hearing impaired educators who were brought up in the old system. The school for the hearing impaired had traditionally been a closed environment where the children went to school and participated in activities designed specifically for their needs. They had a sense of belonging to their school and their group, perceived as comforting. The inclusive process that forced the hearing impaired to leave the walls of the school and attend regional schools, in the normal school environment, seemed to create a loss of identity.

The hearing impaired educators explained that they felt dispersed, sent out to different educational settings, to offer their services to the children and families of their canton. The central meeting place that the school had once offered before inclusion left them feeling displaced. They felt forced to gain new skills and integrate new educational and professional environments. Even more, the role models that they had been as hearing impaired educators, for hearing impaired children, was also being questioned, as more and more families chose implants.

Though the need to learn sign language was still relevant as a language for the hearing impaired, offering a communicational support for implanted children, it was no longer the dominant communicational method. This reality caused cultural tensions within the changing community between the hearing impaired using sign language and the hearing impaired that have implants and have learned to communicate without the need to use sign language. The educators not only functioned as educators, but also as cultural mediators in families with hearing impaired children, teaching sign language to facilitate communication skills Andrew Solomon addresses the cultural tensions in a chapter dedicated to Deaf culture in his book, *Far From the Tree* (Solomon, 2012, p. 49).

Furthermore, specific tasks involving "care" were being assumed by the hearing impaired educators as they increasingly welcomed multiple handicapped children. These children required special attention during the meals that were provided at the day-care center. The risks of choking increased the hearing impaired educator's and the other professional's anxiety during the lunch period that was intended to be a positive social gathering, offering the development of communicational skills.

The risk of choking and the perception that the interdisciplinary team held, concerning their capacity to properly handle an incident, lead to the medical audit. However, the interdisciplinary team questioned many aspects of care, not just care related to feeding. They requested medical counsel pertaining to the multiple types of care given. They sought the medical opinion of the consulting nurse for changing the infants and toddlers, their toiletry, and their movement within the institutional setting. In specialized settings adapted equipment exists to assist professionals as they assume the care of multi- handicapped children, making lifting and moving safer for both children and caregivers. The interdisciplinary team clearly needed to be advised about the risks inherent in their care approaches and the protocols and care guidelines that could allow them to offer the safest environment possible.

The professional practices that had been developed by the therapists and special education teachers were explained during the interview process. All the caregivers were unanimous in requesting continuing education and medical supervision that would allow them to better assume their work with the children and families. They had doubts about their daily routines and needed to reinforce their confidence.

The risks involved in feeding multi-handicapped children had created tensions between certain parents and the professionals. Those tensions were addressed in the healthcare network with the neuropediatrician during a group session. During the processes of resolving the conflict, it became apparent for the entire professional and institutional network that a clearly defined institutional setting was needed to offer a more secure environment for the children as well as the professionals. Implementing safe practice guidelines became the

motivating force inhabiting the team as they sought the support of the director, the inspector, and the departmental head.

There was also a paradigm change concerning implants. Multi-handicapped children are now candidates for implants. Previously they were not considered for the operation. However, improvements in the medical technology opened up opportunities for multi-handicapped children to receive cochlear implants. This constituted an important change in practice, increasing the number of implanted, multi-handicapped children within the ECES. Approximately 20% of the children at the ECES have cochlear implants. As medical technology improves, new categories of children can be implanted. Hearing assessments are made to determine if a child needs a hearing aid or a cochlear implant. Cochlear implants are only advised for children with major hearing-deficits (Nasralla et al., 2014).

Orchestrating the Narratives

This form of inquiry enhances interrelatedness. It can be understood as, "participative ontology" or promoting an "eco-logical" way of being in an organization or institutional setting (McNamee & Hosking, 2012). The process coordinated multiplicity, or the many different voices, in an attempt to keep the conversations going, honoring the different sets of values and beliefs that were communicated throughout the phases of inquiry. When a choir director works with the altos and then the sopranos, the tenors and then the bass in a choir, finally bringing them all together as they each sing their own part of the score, a kind of "uni-verse" emerges. I conducted the process in a similar way. The many voices within the organization were heard during the final orchestration, where all participating parties were invited to share the conclusions of the two reports, offering both a medical and anthropological analysis. The preparation of the group sessions reinforced each team's ability to "carry a tune."

The interviews allowed for an institutional narrative to emerge explaining the evolution of medical practice that was directly influencing the change in the kinds of situations the professionals were routinely assuming in their day-care center. More multi-handicapped children and families were arriving each year. These families had aspirations that their children would be able to follow an adapted school program and find meaningful work as adults. The cochlear implants had indeed changed the perceptions parents had of their children's learning potential. The medical technology had also transformed the institutional goals that aimed at teaching children in normal school environments as part of inclusive school programs supported by the canton's educational legislation.

The legal framework provided the necessary resources for hearing impaired children and children with multiple handicaps to attend their regional schools. Previously, children with the same handicaps would have been put into specialized institutions. They would not have benefited from advanced academic training, allowing them to continue their education. In the past, they would have been placed as young adults in workshops for handicapped people after completing their institutional curriculum. The current inclusive program offers more possibilities for handicapped children, benefiting from a higher level of autonomy. Progressive special education approaches have allowed a growing percentage of hearing impaired children to achieve academically. Their adapted curriculums increase their potential

to integrate the workforce. Up until recently, the only employment opportunity was the canton's protected workshops.

Facilitating Organizational Change

My audit or "e-valuation" outlined organizational and care processes that would facilitate institutional change. Though I used appreciative evaluation based on previous learning experiences and training, it was a new concept for most all of the participants. The processes were designed to require the participation of the interdisciplinary teams. Thus, involving them in the change work deemed necessary. My recommendations did not seek to impose practices, but to encourage collaborative efforts that would enable the interdisciplinary teams to define pathways of care and best practices that would provide an explicit institutional framework.

In this way, guidelines would be defined through teamwork. Though the special education department had provided a great deal of freedom, allowing the professionals working closely with the children and families to develop new skills and interventions, responding to the emerging needs and increased knowledge in the field, there was an outcry for a more secure and defined institutional framework. There was also a need to better define professional roles and responsibility. An effort to reinforce efficacy and efficiency in the educational, therapeutic, and care pathways was undertaken because of dissatisfaction with the daily routines within the work setting.

The interdisciplinary teams accepted the diagnostic analysis from the medical team as well as my audit because they were in need of practical solutions. They collaborated by participating in the interviews and the feedback sessions. Optimal care is achieved through evidence based medicine and best practices that must be adopted by interdisciplinary teams within complex networks. By bringing together the different professional actors, consultants, departmental leaders, and decision-makers, the diagnostic phase was performed in a joint presentation. Opening up a large, dialogical group space reinforced the group's coherence and agency. The interviews and mind-maps laid the foundation for an empowering group experience.

Processes Designed To Improve Care

The medical team made specific care recommendations and set up a medical supervision for the team at the day-care center. I proposed multi-level processes to facilitate change. My recommendations included creating a continuing education program within the institution allowing all the caregivers to exchange knowledge and best practices in a transversal training. The program's aim would be to strengthen emotional intelligence among team members as well as practical knowledge. I suggested that the informal network created with the neuropediatrician should be validated and become a formal, recognized network with defined care pathways and patient trajectories including both healthcare and educational visions. To reinforce the participation and collaboration with the parents, I suggested each child have a specialized program that was negotiated as soon as parents announced brought their child to setting. The program should contain the information pertinent for medical care, material, educational programs, and any other necessary information needed for optimal care. Mediation resources were suggested in order to prevent conflicts. Moving the cafeteria closer

to the classrooms and therapeutic setting was also put forward as a means to reduce the difficulties associated with moving the multiple handicapped children within the building.

In order to help clarify the roles and responsibilities of each member of the interdisciplinary team and improve collaboration, a detailed job description for each employee was suggested, requiring examples of job description templates concerning each professional status, as defined by the canton's law. The legal framework supporting inclusive practices is currently being adopted with new legislative proposals. A process defining best practices, supporting inclusion, would assure the continuity of the care pathways in place. By composing a charter of inclusion, the school's director and the department head would leave behind a model of inclusive practices and values; a legacy of inclusive leadership. Such a charter would reinforce the leadership vision and help those with positions of responsibility within the network to communicate their landscape of meaning to the diverse professionals within the work setting. In conclusion, the recommendations suggested that a facilitator be hired to accompany the change process and assure that the necessary resources would be made available to meet the newly identified needs. They outlined findings, courses of action, and specific processes in order to improve care. The final document that was sent out to all team members suggested the inclusion of user's perceptions and participation in the decision-making process.

Emerging Ethical Reflections

This case study demonstrates the "assemblages of care" in relation to the politics and practices of the inclusion of hearing impaired and multi-handicapped children within day-care and educational environments. In countries like Switzerland, medical technology allows doctors to save the lives of premature babies, who may have as little as twenty-four weeks of gestation. The handicaps associated with these premature infants require new therapeutic practices and care adapted to their needs. The inclusion of these children within the day-care centers and school system provide increased challenges for interdisciplinary teams providing therapy, education and care on a daily basis.

The incredible social capital inherent in this day-care center and school provides greatly appreciated assistance to families searching for appropriate healthcare and educational resources. It is through the relational bonds established between parents and professional caregivers and educators, when a child enters a day-care setting, that valuable information can be transmitted in the first years of a child's life. These centers of social capital also function as a support system for families with handicapped children, offering both needed care and guidance. The professional teams also help to shoulder the burden of care.

During the period of the audit, a multi-handicapped child died. The team's work accompanying the child's family was reflected upon and discussed, as they sought to define their role at the child's funeral. Following the funeral, the child's mother revisited the day-care center to say good-bye to the professionals and parents that she had come to know during the months she had participated in the program. It became clear that the care of multi-handicapped children included accompanying parents through the grieving process. Further, the team realized that some children receiving their care would not survive. All agreed that an appropriate protocol be envisioned for this newly realized possibility.

In the many in-depth conversations it was shared that certain parents find it difficult to accept that doctors go to great measures to save premature babies, which require parents to provide life-long care for multi-handicapped children. As parents must shoulder the majority of the responsibility for the care of their children, some question the ethics of medical interventions that are able to save premature babies, without resolving the complex care issues that unfold during the course of a multi-handicapped person's lifetime. The politics and ethics of care span across disciplines, creating experiential spaces of practice like this day-care center, allowing us to analyze the appropriateness of public health and educational services impacting individual lives and families. This case study fostered a life-course perception of care for all the participants.

The collaborative conversations that the appreciative e-valuation initiated allowed the marginalized voices of parents to be heard. It also allowed the transformation of professional perceptions. The importance of the day-care center as a precious social capital for families seeking resources for their special needs children was appreciated by all. As the collaborative continuum became more coherent, the ethical implications of new medical technology capable of saving the lives of the tiniest of babies brought into focus the burden of care on families. To balance the burden of care, it becomes increasingly clear that social solidarity is imperative. The resources present in this day-care center show the important roles that therapists, special education teachers, and educators play, orienting families as they navigate through the matrix of resources, searching for a tailored response to care, therapy and education. Assemblages of methods meet with assemblages of care in this appreciative "e-valuation" of complex special education settings. The healing conversations that were initiated opened up dialogical space, offering a collaborative pathway forward.

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Section IV
Research and Evaluation

Discourse Analysis and Educational Research: Challenge and Promise[1]

Eleftheria Tseliou

There is no space outside discourse.
Luke, 1995/1996, p. 40

My aim with this chapter is to highlight how the past and present meeting between discourse analysis and educational research may constitute a challenge and thus hold future promise for transformations in mainstream education. In particular, I aim at pointing to the ways that such a meeting can contribute to a social constructionist way of (re)visioning educational research and thus educational theory and practice.

Discourse Analysis and educational research already have had decades of an 'intimate' relationship. From early innovative attempts aimed at unpacking the detail of classroom interaction by means of discursive analysis (e.g., Coulthard, 1974) to the present extended popularity of critical discourse analysis (see e.g., Rogers, Malancharuvil-Berkes, Mosley, Hui, & O'Carro, 2005), a trend of educational research seems to strive for introducing social constructionist ideas and premises in the terrain of scientific inquiry. In that sense, this trend meets with the theorising and the applications of discourse analysis methodology in other disciplines, like psychology, linguistics or sociology.

Here, I offer a sketch of this long-standing relationship. I also point to its potential for educational research and consequently educational practice. To do so, I start with a brief overview of the interdisciplinary field of discourse analysis methodology by also pointing to examples of applications of different trends of discourse analysis methodology in educational research. Then, I attempt to draw a sketch of the ways in which discourse analytic educational research meets with social constructionist ideas. In conclusion, I draw implications concerning the (further) potential of discourse analysis methodology for educational research. Despite existing limitations, my main point is that discourse analysis methodology can have a significant contribution in the field of educational research, provided that we aim at 'instilling' 'social constructionist ideals' in educational theory and practice. Furthermore, I am arguing that due to its multi-disciplinary rooting, discourse analysis can significantly add to the enrichment of educational research and practice, by means of promoting more sound links of the field with other disciplines.

[1] This chapter is dedicated to the memory of my father, Apostolos Tselios, a man of few words, who taught me that I should treat discourse with respect and care.

A reflexive note on 'method' and a disclaimer

My main resource for this chapter rests on my extensive search of the relevant literature as well as on a previously conducted methodological review (Tseliou, 2013). By using the keywords 'discourse analysis' and 'educational research,' I first searched PsycINFO and Eric databases. This initial search resulted in 1102 hits. I then narrowed down my search by selecting texts, which included both empirical studies but also seminal theoretical texts about discourse analysis methodology, written by leading figures in discourse analysis research and reviews of discourse analysis educational research. I also tracked down further texts, which I identified by means of the initial papers' reference lists. The number of texts I finally went through in a non-systematic way amounts to sixty-eight. Of course, I do not claim an all-inclusive search and I do acknowledge the possibility of potentially excluding promising contributions unintentionally. I also acknowledge that my narrative of the meeting between discourse analysis and educational research possibly reflects a meeting I personally experienced: coming from a background in psychology with a lasting, by now, systematic engagement with discourse analysis methodology (Diorinou & Tseliou 2014; Patrika & Tseliou, 2015; Tseliou & Eisler, 2007), I recently encountered educational research. Thus, my claims for the potential of such a meeting as well as my choice to highlight the resonance between the discourse analytic accounts which originate in psychology and those which originate in education may be situated in this context. Furthermore, my background in systemic family therapy and my preference for the pragmatic aspects of discourse and communication possibly account for my enthusiasm with certain trends in discourse analysis research as compared to others.

Finally, my choice of the word 'method' for this section may possibly come across as controversial in the context of a text, which broadly espouses a social constructionist epistemological perspective. Arguments 'against method' in the sense that Feyerabend (1993) once claimed, become at times part and parcel of social constructionist narratives of research practices or scientific argumentation. On the other hand, such a practice, may lead to a lack of explication of the procedures followed in order to come up with certain knowledge claims and runs the risk of obscuring the road to their establishment. This is mainly the reason that I ascribe more to a social constructionist perspective which prioritizes reflexivity and transparency as means to handle the responsibility inherent in adopting a constructionist ethical perspective (Tseliou & Psaropoulos, 2005). Coupled with my interest in research methodology as a field of study, this preference for transparency accounts for this brief note on 'method.'

Discourse analysis: A colourful landscape of diversity and multi-disciplinarity

In the field of social sciences, the sweeping effect of the epistemological turn to constructivist/constructionist perspectives in the (scientific) quest for knowledge is by now a repeatedly narrated story (Burr, 1995; Gergen, 1999). It entails main premises like the acknowledgment of the central role of language for the construction of any meaning, the constitutive aspect of discourse, the importance of socio-cultural

and historical context and, most important, the adherence to the temporality and the non-finite nature of knowledge.

Research-wise, this contributed to an emphasis on hermeneutic processes as well as to the idea that the very act of observation can alter the 'object' of observation and thus no process for acquiring knowledge can be uncontaminated by the observer's eye (Maturana & Varela, 1992). Such a shift has contributed to the emergence of what is broadly identified as qualitative or hermeneutic research methodology. The field of hermeneutic research is not a homogeneous one and entails a number of various approaches and methodologies rooted in a diversity of theoretical and epistemological traditions, including hermeneutics, phenomenology, constructionism, critical realism, etc. (Willig, 2013). Nevertheless, such approaches seem to share a committment to the idea that there is no value-free, objective account or description of any phenomena concerning the world in which we inhabit. And this includes what we think of as 'scientific accounts.'

Recently, discourse analysis seems to claim a central position in the landscape of this mode of inquiry, as evident in publications, in the set up of relevant Journals and in the formation of networks across various disciplines (Keller, 2013). It is important to note, however, that the term 'discourse analysis' points to a variety of trends and applications which differ both in terms of their epistemological back-cloths but also in terms of the proposed methods. It also points to theoretical perspectives but also to specific methodological proposals for the analysis of both spoken and written discourse. Furthermore, it has been related with theoretical and methodological developments across a variety of disciplines, including psychology, education, sociology, linguistics, cultural anthropology, etc. (van Dijk, 1981; Potter, 2012; Willig, 2013). Despite their divergence, these developments seem to share both a preference for the systematic study of texts (van Dijk, 1981) but also a number of main adherences. These mostly include an emphasis on *discourse use* in the context of social exchanges where meanings are socially constructed by means of interpretative processes and shaped by socio-political and historical conditions interwoven with institutional practices (Keller, 2013). Thus, discourse is approached as a form of social action and meaning as situated, context-specific and dialogically shaped (Twiner, Littleton, Coffin, & Whitelock, 2014). Discourse analytic approaches all seem to share a preference for alternative conceptualizations of phenomena of scientific inquiry as compared to what is often termed 'mainstream' approaches. However, this committment to change and to revolutionary re-conceptualizations of current practice is possibly better understood as a broad spectrum with variable degrees of adherence to political activism.

In her discussion of discourse analytic methodological approaches, Willig (2013) follows a widespread distinction between two broadly defined, main trends. The terms 'bottom up' and 'top down' approaches to the analysis of discourse refer to what is otherwise discussed as the British tradition as compared to the French tradition in discourse theories and analysis. The first entails approaches with a close affiliation with ethnomethodology and the British tradition of logical philosophy, as e.g. expressed in Wittgenstein's philosophy (see e.g., Wittgenstein, 1958). The choice

of the term ‘bottom up’ for this trend reflects the emphasis on the ways that discourse is constructed by means of people’s everyday discursive practices (Willig, 2013). The second trend, relates more with French structuralist and post-structuralist theorising, as e.g. expressed by Foucault (see e.g., Foucault, 1972). Similarly, the choice of the term ‘top down’ aims at highlighting the oppressive and constitutive aspects of discourse by means of its interconnectedness with power and institutional practices (Willig, 2013).

Despite the fact that this categorization originates in an account of discourse analytic approaches in psychological research and may come across as crude, in my subsequent discussion of discourse analytic approaches in educational research, I will retain it for the following reasons. First, as I have already argued, discourse analysis is multidisciplinary in nature (Fairclough, 2003). I think that the distinction between discourse analysis in psychology and discourse analysis in education is mostly a distinction drawn on the basis of possibly different topics of inquiry and not so much on the basis of methodological differences. A close examination of discourse analysis texts across disciplines exposes striking resemblances and interconnections. Second, a similar pattern has been reported in the context of discussions concerning discourse analytic approaches deployed by educational research. For example, Luke (1995/1996) identifies three main strands of discursively oriented educational research, which include psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics and post-structural (mainly Foucauldian) analysis. Again, what seems to differentiate these trends, is their preference for either a perspective which sheds lights on how people construct discourse in the course of their everyday transactions or a perspective which highlights how historically and culturally available sets of discursive practices may restrain peoples’ choices, construct power relationships and thus shape subjectivities and living practices.

Discourse as constructed

Truth is not born nor is it to be found
inside the head of an individual person,
it is born between people collectively searching for truth,
in the process of their dialogic interaction.
Bakhtin, 1984, p.110.

The study of discourse with an emphasis on peoples’ everyday discursive interactions in the sense proposed by Garfinkel’s (1967) ethnomethodological perspective has a long-standing tradition across disciplines. It entails a preference for an emphasis on how people themselves make sense of their interactions. Such an emphasis is broadly reflected in the most distinctive features of this trend in discourse analysis research. These include the choice of *talk-in-interaction* as the main locus of emphasis for the study of any phenomena and the adherence to a *pragmatic orientation* as concerns the approach to discourse and to the idea that discourse has an *action orientation* and a *reflexive quality*. They also include an *interactional approach*

to subjectivity and finally the preference for *ethnomethodological indifference* as concerns the analyst's perspective.

Thus, the main idea is that, while in talk-in-interaction, we constantly engage in interpretations of each other's discursive contributions and thus manage to construct meaning and make sense of the world around us. This makes meaning always attached to a particular context, like Wittgenstein (1958) argued when he claimed that it is the way that we use language in the context of interaction that ascribes meaning to words. Such a view also introduces an action oriented perspective to discourse similar to what was introduced by Austin's pragmatics, as eloquently expressed in the well-known motto and title of his book, *How to do things with words* (1962). Austin (1962) argued for the constitutive 'nature' of words and for approaching language as a form of social activity and not as merely descriptive.

Furthermore, in this trend of discourse theories, talk is approached as entailing an inherent, reflexive quality, in the sense that interlocutors i.e. people in talk-in-interaction, are both exchanging content but also information about the context of their exchange. Watzlawick, Beavin-Bavelas and Jackson (1967), in their pragmatic tentative theory of human communication, elaborately explicate this point in the axiom where they claim that each communication entails both a level of content and a level of process or a relationship level. The latter carries information about how communication content should be de-coded, e.g. is it to be taken as a friendly joke, a threat etc. In that sense, discourse always acquires its meaning by the context of its use (Gee & Green, 1998).

Methodologically speaking, the tradition of conversation analysis rooted by Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974) has been keen on undertaking this approach and translating it into a rigorous methodological approach to the study of everyday, mundane talk. Language and interaction are approached as the building blocks of the social order and the emphasis is placed upon unraveling the structure of this order. In that sense, Gee & Green (1998) are possibly right in differentiating the ethnomethodological notion of reflexivity in discourse as mostly linked with the building of social order from a more dialogic perspective as e.g. forwarded by Bakhtin's theorizing (Bakhtin, 1984). The latter seems to place the emphasis more on meaning, interpretation and interaction and less on the discourse structure, in the sense that the relationship between the speaker and the hearer is prioritised as the context for the construction of any meaning.

If conversation analysis is keen on unpacking the mundane ways in which social order is constructed and downplayed in the course of every day interactions, discursive psychology adds an alternative perspective to the theorising and study of mental and psychological phenomena. Closely affiliated with conversation analysis, discursive psychology was pioneered by social psychologists, like Jonathan Potter, Margaret Wetherell and Derek Edwards (for a historical account on its development see Potter, 2010).

Discursive Psychology. Discursive psychology introduces a promising line of research practice in tune with social constructionist premises. Discourse is not

approached as the medium but as the locus of study concerning any topic like, mental phenomena, organizations etc. (Potter & Hepburn, 2008). The choice of 'discourse' as a key-term and not 'language' denotes the commitment with a pragmatic orientation as opposed to a mere linguistic one (Potter & Hepburn, 2008). Discourse is approached as action and emphasis is placed on its constitutive and functional aspect. It is also 'occasioned,' that is attached to a certain context (Potter & Edwards, 2001; Potter & Wiggins, 2008) and serves to the management of various interpersonal aims, like the construction of complaints, etc. This emphasis on an interactional perspective extends to theorising about identity and subjectivity and recent contributions (Bozatzis, 2014; Wetherell, 2007) argue for the potential of this type of discourse analysis for the study and theorizing of non-discursive features as well as emotions. Thus a relational perspective is forwarded concerning issues of identity construction in a sense similar to the one argued in seminal social constructionist texts (see e.g., Gergen, 2009).

This relational perspective is also evident in basic tenets of discursive psychology. For discursive psychology, "action is situated sequentially, institutionally and rhetorically" (Potter, 2012, p. 123). Thus meaning can be decoded by an emphasis on how discourse is constructed on a turn-by-turn basis, i.e. by decoding the sequential organization of utterances in the context of an interaction. However, it is acknowledged that this organization is not constructed in a vacuum; instead every discourse has an institutional aspect in the sense that it is interwoven with the wider socio-cultural and political context in which it is unraveled. As the notion of 'ethnomethodological indifference' dictates, the aim of analysis is to attend to the ways that people themselves make sense of their interactions, as evident if one ascribes to the notion of the 'next-turn-proof' (Wooffitt, 2005): the next utterance is assumed to be revealing of the way in which one has decoded the preceeding utterance of the other.

Finally, as clearly elaborated in the context of the Discursive Action Model (Edwards & Potter, 1992) every account exhibits a rhetorical organization in the sense that we engage into argumentation concerning our perspective and this entails complex accountability issues. As argued (Edwards & Potter, 1992), in order to manage the complex accountability issues concerning the arguments speakers often engage in, there may be an effort to deliver them as if they have a factual quality - an existence beyond their own discourse - as facts of an independent world 'out-there.' Thus, discursive psychology forwards a relational perspective in a social constructionist sense, as it emphasizes how discourse is organized always in the context of a relationship, either on a micro or on a macro level of interaction.

Overall, discursive psychology also meets with social constructionism in its anti-cognitivist and anti-essentialist perspective concerning psychological phenomena. In that sense, it has been argued (Potter & Hepburn, 2008) that it also departs from the tradition of cognitive constructionism and the ways it has been espoused, for example, by van Dijk and Wodak. The latter seems to retain a split between representation and practice or else between discourse and cognition (Potter & Hepburn, 2008). Nevertheless, van Dijk and Wodak pioneered the introduction of

discourse analysis theorizing and analytic practice in cognitivism (Keller, 2013) and this is an invaluable contribution. Finally, Gee's proposal seems to share with this trend of discourse analysis a systemic-pragmatic orientation also rooted in the ethnomethodological tradition, which seems to bear a close affiliation with approaches developed in the States, including Bateson's epistemology (Bateson, 1979). This can be detected, for example, in the emphasis on the importance of context for the constitution of any meaning, including the cultural context, which becomes the main resource from which interlocutors draw while in talk-in-interaction (Gee & Green, 1998; Gee, 2011).

Discourse as constitutive

> *There is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations*.
> Foucault, 1979, p. 27

On the other side of the spectrum, and despite the shared emphasis on the prioritizing of discourse, 'top down' approaches to discourse analysis adhere to a different starting point and espouse a commitment to the highlighting of issues like *power*, *ideology*, *political and social change*, *subjectivity as interlinked with discourse* and *political activism*. Meta-theories, which have been identified as very influential include post-structuralism and Marxist or Neo-Marxist philosophy as forwarded by thinkers like Foucault, Althousser or Gramsci (van Dijk, 1993). Central notions include the notion of discourse as theorized by Foucault or the notion of genre in the way it has been mostly forwarded by cultural studies (Fairclough, 2003), the notion of intertextuality (Kristeva, 1986), and the notion of hegemony (Gramsci, 1973).

A Foucauldian perspective on the notion of discourse places emphasis on the ways that various texts with historical underpinnings may systematically construct subject positions, which are then taken up by people in the course of their transactions. Such positions delineate but also restrain choices and entitlement given that certain discourses become dominant, as they are legitimized by certain institutional practices (Foucault, 1972) or hegemonic by means of ideology and thus accepted as common sense (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). In that sense, language, knowledge and power are approached as interwoven and discourse is approached as oppressive or else as constitutive (see also, Parker, 1992; Parker, 2014). This accounts for the resonance of words or phrases across different texts and makes the construction of either meaning or subjectivity an intertextual process (Fairclough, 2003). In such a context, subjectivity is theorized as fragmented, constructed on the basis of difference and ideologically constituted across historical and political contexts (see Henriques, Hollway, Urwin, Venn, & Walkerdine, 1984 for a seminal text).

In a very informative review of critical discourse analysis studies in educational research, published between 1980-2005, Rogers, et al. (2005) identify three different trends, which all comprise the landscape of critical discourse analysis: post-feminist studies, discourse analysis studies with a Foucauldian perspective, and critical linguistics. Furthermore, Rogers et al. (2005) identify Fairclough's proposal, as the most dominant perspective adopted by the studies they review, whereas critical discourse analysis is also argued as extensively deployed by contemporary educational research (Rogers, 2011).

Fairclough's (2003) critical discourse analysis includes a type of textual analysis, which draws heavily from Haliday's systemic functional linguistics (see e.g., Haliday, 1978). Despite the significant contribution of the latter to a socially informed approach to linguistics, Fairclough (2003) draws distinctions concerning the aims of his own approach to the analysis of discourse and argues for a multi-disciplinary perspective. His proposal concerning analysis includes attention to linguistic and grammatical features of texts, to semantic but also epistemic features, to the relationship of the particular text with others (intertextuality) and to its relationship with social practices and widely circulating relevant discourses. In that sense, each text is approached as simultaneously spoken or written discourse, as an instance of discursive interaction and at the same time as constituting a form of social practice (Rogers et al., 2005). van Dijk (1993) notes the inherent attachment of critical discourse analysis to the study of dominance, power and inequality with an overall aim to highlight social issues. He delineates the links with the Frakfurt School and Neo-Marxist theorising. In that sense he somehow meets with Fairclough (1992; 2003) in explicitly attaching a political agenda in critical discourse analysis, when the latter claims that its main aim is to unravel the ways in which current neo-liberal and capitalist choices restrain peoples' lives.

Cultural studies and theorising in sociology, as e.g. expressed by Willis or Bourdieu also have resonance with this trend, as they attempted to bridge educational settings with wider societal practices (Rogers et al., 2005). At the more activist end of the spectrum, post-structurally informed discourse analysis research aims at empowering the marginalized and at promoting agency by revealing often-obscured power asymmetries (Baxter, 2002; Luke, 1995/1996). In tune with the epistemological perspective of post-structuralism and neo-marxism, discourse analysis of this type aims at highlighting the ways in which social order and social structure are performed in the context of educational discursive practices (Rogers et al., 2005).

Discourse analysis and educational research

Education is textual.
van Dijk, 1981, p. 2

Both 'bottom up' and 'top down' approaches to the study of discourse have by now been extensively deployed for the study of educational topics. As concerns 'bottom up' approaches, up until the 1980s, ethnographic studies of classroom talk, which dominated the field, were inspired by the so-called 'linguistic turn' (Luke,

1995/1996). Their affinity with 'bottom up' approaches to the analysis of discourse lies in their attempt to unravel how educational phenomena become constructed in the course of teacher-student, everyday classroom interaction (e.g., Coulthard, 1974; Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975). For example, Coulthard (1974) aimed at decoding the structures inherent in linguistic interaction as it concerns classroom discourse, with a special interest in power and asymmetry in the teacher/student relationship. His functional, structural proposal possibly departs from social constructionist perspectives as it points to structures, which are assumed to be inherent in interaction rather than negotiated, constructed and context-specific. Nevertheless, his proposal contributed in highlighting a number of linguistic devices by means of which teacher dominance is downplayed in ways which portray a non-collaborative, one-way structured type of interaction. In that sense, his work offers pertinent insight in the ways that asymmetry is built up in teacher-student interaction and his proposal for the three part structure (teacher asks, student answers and teacher evaluates) can be of use in conversation analysis and discourse analysis educational research.

More recently, further promising contributions include the study of both classroom discourse but also of academic discourse. For example, Benwell and Stokoe (2002) artfully exemplify how the mundane analysis of academic/educational discourse can unravel hierarchy and the ways that it becomes discursively and interactionally downplayed. Aligned with the Vygotskian tradition, but moving away from cognitivist constructivism and towards social constructionism, they attempt to highlight how learning takes place as part of dialogic interaction. Their analysis of tutorial sessions and student group discussions demonstrates how power and asymmetry become a complex matter under negotiation where both the authoritarian and the subordinate role are not unproblematically allocated between tutor (expert) and students (non-experts). Finally, Benwell's and Stokoe's work also presents a very useful example of discursive analysis which pays attention both to the micro-level of local interaction but also to its resonance and connection with the wider, macro-social level. In a similar way, discourse analytic studies have attempted to unpack the minutia of academic discourse in higher education by focusing for example on the study of office hours conversations (Limberg, 2007) or on the discursive construction of academic identity (McInnes, 2013). In tune with the overall discourse analytic perspective, and despite their methodological choices, such studies highlight how discourse in such a setting is managed and shaped both on an institutional level but also on a local, topical level in the context of participants' interaction.

Few studies seem to have incorporated the methodology of discursive psychology for the study of educational processes (McLean, 2012; Roth, 2008; Roth & Lukas, 1997). Roth (2008), for example, takes up the case against a cognitivist approach to science education, in that he argues for a situated and contextual approach to knowledge and learning. His study attempts a discursively and interactionally oriented approach to scientific conceptions. McLean (2012), on the other hand, samples five English-speaking tutors and attempts to study the way that academic identity is discursively negotiated and constructed by means of discursive psychology.

Gee's proposal possibly lies somewhere in the middle, as it comes across as a more holistic approach, which combines both a micro and a macro level perspective. Gee's well known distinction between Discourse (capital D), i.e. culturally available sets of discursive practices and discourse (small d), i.e. local ways of language in use (Gee, 2011) points to a dual perspective. In their ethnography of classroom discourse, Gee and Green (1998) attempt an approach which pays attendance to issues concerning context and setting including materiality, sociocultural and semiotic aspects. It also includes attendance to issues concerning what participants construct by means of language in the course of their interaction. Gee's proposal is possibly a good example which shows how the line between 'bottom up' and 'top down' approaches is often breached. It constitutes one of the most influential trends in discourse analytic educational research and is also clustered under the term critical discourse analysis (Gee, 2011; Rogers, 2011).

Despite the long-standing, established tradition of discourse analytic study of talk-in-interaction in educational research, the popularity of 'bottom-up' approaches seems limited as compared to the past and current preference for critical approaches to the study of educational discourse in the sense espoused by 'top-down' approaches to discourse analysis (see also, Rogers, 2011). Thus, there are by now numerous examples of educational research studies which espouse a critical discourse analysis or post-structuralist perspective. For example, education policy texts from different cultural backgrounds are scrutinized for ideological perspectives like neo-liberal ones in Pini & Gorostiaga's (2008) study which mostly draws from Fairclough's and Chouliaraki's perspective (for the latter see, Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999). They discuss the comparison between texts from Latin America and the States in the context of the tension between autonomy and state intervention in education policy. Another example for a promising different line of inquiry can be traced in the work of Gottlieb (1989), who engages in a foucauldian discourse analysis of seminal texts in education, such as Freire's, *Paedagogy of the Oppressed* (1968). She argues that Freire's quest for rehumanization makes him a reformist rather than a revolutionist, since it seems to obscure the fact that a change in social structure is needed if we want to transform educational practice, as Foucault would have argued.

Baxter's (2002) work constitutes another very interesting and promising example of a post-structuralist, 'top-down' approach to discourse analysis. Following Walkerdines' tradition, Baxter argues for the potential of feminist post-structuralist discourse analysis. She argues that its deployment can bring to the fore discursive expressions of culture and gender which are often subtle and frequently overlooked by texts of educational policy or educational texts overall. Her argument is that feminist post-structural discourse analysis can show how these can have a dynamic interplay with how boys and girls are positioned in everyday classroom discourse.

Rebecca Webb (2015, this volume) also presents a good example on how a post-structuralist perspective, also inspired by the theorizing of Laclau & Mouffe (1985), Butler (2004) and Rancière (1991), translates into the study of the ways that the Discourse of human rights becomes part of everyday discursive practices in the case of one English primary school.

Finally, literacy research also provides a fruitful landscape for discourse analytic educational research, which seems closer to a critical discourse analysis tradition, as the review of Rex et al. (2010) demonstrates. The reviewed discourse analysis studies seem to establish a social constructionist approach to literacy, in the sense that they espouse a socio-cultural and historical perspective. Literacy is studied as being performed or constructed on a three-part level of context, extending from the micro (discourse in use in the context e.g. of classroom interaction), to the meso (discourse genres in contexts outside school like e.g., family) and to the macro (texts e.g. about educational policy) level. Their review of the discourse analysis studies is then structured along two very interesting questions, including, "Whose literacies count?" and "Which literacies count?" (Rex et al., 2010, p. 98). Discourse analytic studies unravel both the ways that decisions are performed in the context of educational policy texts but also the subtle ways in which the literacies of certain groups seem left out in the context of everyday classroom discourse. They also unravel the ways that both become shaped and are interwoven with wider socio-cultural and historical contexts. Further examples of contributions in critical discourse analytic educational research can be found in Roger's (2011) edited volume.

Finally, and in a sense from a different angle, Bakhtin's popularity in educational discourse is hinted by discourse analysis studies which select his dialogic approach as the theoretical and epistemological backcloth to their analysis, like in the case of Nystrand, Wu, Gamoran, Zeiser, & Long (2003), who attempted to pin down dialogic and monologic sequences in teacher and student interaction.

So far, I have tried to draw a sketch of the ways that various trends of discourse analysis have been utilized for the study of educational issues and processes by pointing to two diverse overall trends, namely the 'bottom-up' and the 'top-down' perspectives. The question of whether one should ascribe to one or the other has been fervently debated (see e.g., Billig, 1999; Schegloff, 1997; see also Bozatzis, 2014 for a very informative discussion of the relevant tensions) and a both/and perspective has also been proposed (Wetherell, 1998). Thus, both assets and drawbacks have been identified in following one or the other perspective. 'Bottom – up' approaches have been criticized for their inability to unravel the complex ways in which the micro level of discursive transactions is interwoven with the wider socio-cultural and political macro-level (e.g., Schegloff, 1997). On the other hand, 'top-down' perspectives have often been criticized for methodological inadequacy, mostly including an engagement in an abstract, vague, content-oriented analysis (Luke, 1995/1996; Rogers et al., 2005). On the other hand, the first trend has been keen on demonstrating how everyday discursive practices can be constitutive of the educational world(s) in which we live. Correspondingly, the second has offered a valuable insight on how power is exercised and reproduced in educational contexts and how educational texts are interwoven with ideology (Rogers et al., 2005). The choice of one or the other is probably a matter of epistemological and, in that sense, aesthetic preference.

In any case, I hope that this brief overview of both has already highlighted the relevance and potential of discourse analysis for educational research, irrespective of

whether one chooses one or the other direction. As discussed, areas of potential applications may include the study of educational processes as operating in talk-in-interaction (e.g, Roth and Lucas, 1997), literacy (Rex et al, 2010), educational policy texts, adult education (e.g., Wilson, 2009), the study of academic texts including seminal texts and their underlying assumptions (Gottlieb, 1989) or student accountability talk (Michaels, O'Connor, & Resnick, 2008). As van Dijk (1981) rightfully points out in his discussion of discourse studies in education, since texts dominate education, discourse analytic research can have applications of wide-relevance. In that sense, his main argument for discourse studies, which facilitate a multi-level analysis of texts including both the study of processes related with learning and knowledge, as well as discourse structures, remains topical.

Discourse analysis educational research: A 'constructionist' move forward?

The indicated potential areas of study can of course be approached by a number of different and often epistemologically incompatible research methodologies. In this section, I would now like to turn to the argument that the choice of discourse analytic research methodologies, however, can uniquely contribute to research practices, which favour a broadly defined social constructionist epistemological perspective. In this way, it can contribute towards a social constructionist revisioning of education.

Like discourse analysis, social constructionism is also an umbrella term, under which many different theories and applications across disciplines are often clustered. For example, Potter (1996) identifies at least twelve different traditions, including post-structuralism, discourse analysis, conversation analysis, critical ethnography, sociology of knowledge, etc. McNamee and Hosking (2012) discuss the difference between Gergen's relational constructionism and other perspectives. Furthermore, discourse analysis research has been linked with epistemological perspectives often discussed as contradictory with social constructionism, like critical realism (see Willig, 2013).

In my use of the term here, I will, however, follow the broad definition which locates as central the emphasis on pragmatic aspects of language, the emphasis on the significance of the relational matrix in the context of which everything gets constructed as well as the importance of socio-cultural and political specificity concerning any construction (Gergen, 1999; Potter, 1996). A social constructionist perspective means acceptance of the axiom that there is no meaning outside interaction in the Wittgesteinian sense (Wittgenstein, 1958). Therefore, it thus adheres to the notion that knowledge is always local and context-specific: there is no finite answer, no perfection as concerns knowledge (Gergen, 1999).

The introduction of the social constructionist perspective in education has, thus, certain implications. Given the centrality of knowledge for any educational process, as well as the forwarding of a relational perspective, 'relational' education implies a shift towards uncertainty and a move from hierarchy to heterarchy (Gergen & Wortham, 2001; Wortham & Jackson, 2012). In other words, such a shift implies

the acceptance of the locality and temporality of knowledge as well as a commitment for more collaborative and less hierarchical relationships. I believe that discourse analytic research can have significant contributions in relation to both.

First, discourse analysis of either a 'bottom up' or 'top down' perspective can significantly forward a social constructionist approach to the study of knowledge and learning. Discourse analysis promotes the acceptance of an inseparable relationship between language, mind and the world in the sense that Gergen and Wortham (2001) argue in their review of endogenic (mind as the locus of knowledge) and exogenic (world as the locus of knowledge) traditions concerning knowledge. It can thus offer unique ways to highlight how language is constitutive of both learning and knowledge as compared to providing simply the means for acquiring them.

Discourse Analytic educational research further facilitates the study of learning or knowledge, as 'interactional enterprises' by espousing an anti-cognitivist and anti-individualist perspective, like social constructionism. It can exemplify both the interactive processes in the context of which knowledge is debated and downplayed but also the contradictions inherent in every epistemic position. Discourse analysis of the discursive psychology type, in particular, can admirably unravel the artfulness of the dance of coordination in which educators and students engage when in talk-in-(classroom) interaction in the joint, reciprocal enterprise of the quest for learning and knowledge. For example, Marin-Aresse's (2011) work on epistemic legitimizing strategies and accountability concerning knowledge claims may offer unique contributions for the study of knowledge as a discursive interactive accomplishment, which could be taken up by educational research.

Second, discourse analysis can facilitate the social constructionist proposal for a shift from hierarchy to heterarchy in education. It can offer insightful ways for the study of power and asymmetrical relationships in educational contexts either as interactional accomplishments or textual constructions. Both 'bottom up' and 'top down' discourse analytic approaches can offer pertinent insights on the ways that these are constructed and deconstructed, debated and negotiated as part of the mundane every day classroom and academic discourse. In this way discourse analysis can bring to the fore "the myth of authority as an individual possession" (Gergen & Wortham, 2001, p. 20). Accordingly, critical discourse analysis, in particular, can also highlight how power and authority can be downplayed as part of educational texts of various contexts including policy (Taylor, 2004). In that sense, discourse analysis can facilitate the study of how power can be downplayed across several layers of context, including educator-student interaction and policy decisions imposed on educators (Gergen & Wortham, 2001). Furthermore, either by means of researching classroom interaction or texts, discourse analysis can contribute to exposing dominant discourses on the marginalized, less privileged groups of students on the basis of gender or ethnicity and thus give voice to the latter (Baxter, 2002).

Discourse analysis in educational research can thus join social constructionist proposals concerning education in a dual way. First, it can add to voices promoting a polyvocal, dialogic, contextual and relational perspective against the monological practices forwarded by mainstream hierarchical structures in education (Gergen &

Wortham, 2001; Wortham & Jackson, 2012). Second, it can join long-standing efforts (see Gergen and Wortham, 2001) which have exposed the ways in which marginalized groups of students may suffer more from the inherent inequality and authority structure in education.

Some further moves forward

The deployment of discourse analysis in educational research can, therefore, possibly enhance a kind of epistemic reflexivity by means of shedding light to both acknowledged and latent theoretical assumptions and the ways they inform everyday educational practice. Educational research has been discussed as lacking theoretical and epistemological awareness (Koro-Ljungberg, Yendol-Hoppey, Smith, & Hayes, 2009). Discourse analytic research could potentially make educational research more epistemologically and theoretically aware due to its affiliation with various epistemological perspectives as well as due to its prioritizing of a theoretically informed and epistemologically consistent analytic practice. It could also possibly promote advances in research methodology in education including the effort of a re-structuring of criteria for good quality research practice in qualitative research overall (Freeman et al., 2007).

The aforementioned epistemic reflexivity can also be forwarded by means of bringing to the fore the often latent values, which have been argued as associated with every discursive practice (Gergen & Wortham, 2001) by means of discourse analytic scrutiny of dialogs and texts. In that sense, discourse analytic educational research can help answer questions about the ways that contemporary educational practice has departed or not from traditional mainstream perspectives. Thus it could promote what we can think of as more accountable practices (see e.g. Michaels et al., 2008).

Discourse analytic research can also contribute to the study of categories like gender, ethnicity or identity/subjectivity by forwarding a non-essentialist perspective as often summoned by social constructionist adherences. Baxter's (2002) approach to the study of gender and Wortham's (2004) study of social identity in the context of classroom discourse constitute two notable examples. Along the same line of reasoning, Taylor (2015) argues for a constructionist approach to subjectivity as an alternative to a psychoanalytic one which is usually forwarded by post-structuralist approaches to discourse analysis (e.g. Billig, 1997; Parker, 1997). Discourse analysis could also offer a fruitful line of inquiry as concerns the notion of academic or student/tutor identity, which would be epistemologically consistent with social constructionist theorising, i.e. as constructed and de-constructed in the context of discursive interaction with contradictions and incoherence (see. e.g., Benwell & Stokoe, 2002).

Despite the acknowledgment of the multi-disciplinary nature of education (Biesta, 2011), at times there seems to be an estrangement of educational research from the insight that can be offered by other disciplines, like psychology (see Corcoran & Billington, 2015, this volume). Against such an estrangement, discursive psychology could become a kind of a bridge in that it constitutes a way to research and theorise psychological matters in a constructionist way more favourable to

educators (see Edwards, 1997). It could offer ways for the study of "how the relationship between the mind and the world is performed in education" (Edwards, 1997, p. 40). Whether indented or not, this bridging and related promising links across the two disciplines could be forwarded, as discourse analytic researchers inevitably draw from disciplines like psychology and linguistics (Gee & Green, 1998).

A note on caveats and a disclaimer

Naturally, discourse analysis is not suitable for every type of research question or compatible with any type of epistemological perspective (Tseliou, 2013). Furthermore, despite its promise, discourse analytic methodology is not without restrains as concerns the potential of its deployment.

Discourse analysis – at least in the ways it has been practiced so far - seems to remain an endeavour pursue which necessitates a particular expertise. This can also foster exclusive practices in the case that one opted for a more action-research type of design in educational research. The type of expertise required for discourse analytic research practice would possibly necessitate the training of e.g., teachers in order for them to be able to contribute to a more collaborative enterprise of discourse analytic educational research. In that sense discourse analysis remains more attached to what Gergen and Wortham (2001) refer to as 'disciplinary' knowledge as compared to the more 'practical' knowledge for which they argue in the context of a constructionist reform in education.

Furthermore, and as often is the case with social constructionism, discourse analysis may also come across as lacking the potential to analytically attend to non-linguistic features of discourse or else to embodied practices (Diorinou & Tseliou, 2014). Certain discourse analysis trends argue that the study of discursive interaction can include such features and that the type of analysis deployed is keen on taking such features into account (Wetherell, 2007). Yet, the whole issue remains debated (see e.g., Gergen, 2014) and hopefully open to future advances. Perhaps a challenge to be undertaken might be for discourse analytic research to find ways to entangle what has been termed as the 'materiality of discourse' (McLure, 2013), that is, the non-linguistic features of discourse.

Finally, critical discourse analysis possibly runs a further risk, that of retaining an over-commitment to the idea of forwarding a critical perspective or an overt attachment with the ideal of 'liberation' of the oppressed. This may result to transforming critical discourse analysis of this type into another source of oppression and subjugation of those whose liberation seems 'pre-decided upon' by well-intended scholars. The further risk is that of further disempowerment instead of the aimed empowerment and the strengthening of "authoritarian communities of knowledge makers" (Gergen & Wortham, 2001, p. 19) as well as the constructing of liberation as a new orthodoxy. Lather (1991 cited by Gergen & Wortham, 2001) also guards against such a type of liberation.

An epilogue

In this chapter I have argued that discourse analytic research can highlight the way(s) that language, knowledge, culture and history are interwoven in the matrix of educational practices. It can thus prove a fruitful mode of inquiry for a social constructionist quest for knowledge construction. Discourse analysis can facilitate research on our practices and our textual and discursive preferences, whether acknowledged or latent. It can unmask issues concerning the exercise of power or the operation of ideology. It can also serve as a very informative companion if we opted for gaining insight on our discursive practices and their inherent inconsistencies, contradictions and incoherence, like in the case of our uneasiness with expertise and power from the position of educators, despite its institutional allocation (e.g. Benwell & Stokoe, 2002). In that sense, I share the premise that discourse analytic educational research can foster methodological innovations but also open up both promising and challenging ways for transformation and change (Zeeman, Poggenpoel, Myburgh, & Van Der Linde, 2002). My hope is that educational research will take the chance of such a challenge and promise.

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Negotiating the '3Rs'
Deconstructing the politics of 'Rights, Respect and Responsibility' in one English Primary School

Rebecca Webb

This chapter originates in a doctoral ethnographic research study that I conducted in a small town in England between 2011 and 2013 (Webb, 2014). The focus of this wider study was upon the implications of adopting a dominant discourse of rights as guiding both the policies and practices of a large, mixed, state primary school by way of enacting citizenship and shaping the citizen. It examined the way in which discourses of children's rights, especially, were played out in the lived experiences of a range of actors – adults and children alike - during the period in which the research was conducted. The attention of this chapter, however, is more specifically upon intersections of education and politics and the subject as part of this process. It is concerned with the way in which all three marry with tacit assumptions of 'rights', 'responsibilities' and 'respect' (the '3Rs'). These are ideals that are integral to an understanding of a liberal discourse of human rights, to the wider research, and to this chapter. The implication of the '3Rs' seems to be that the education of the subject that it facilitates is neither political, nor *should* it be.

Prompted by a post-structural understanding of subjectivity, this chapter draws upon data which problematizes 'the political' and 'politics', and the relationship of both to implicit assumptions asserted within schooling discourses of rights. Rather than only policies and practices that govern state or institutional structures, my analysis of the discourses of rights, respect and responsibilities demonstrates how politics and the political are implicated in the processes of democratization and also of subjectification. I tease out inherent disjunctures in the dominant liberal, rational and moral language and performativity of human rights hailed at one and the same time as both emancipatory and yet '*not* political'. I further illuminate the fluidity and contingencies of these processes, and their construction through the 'local', suggesting, too, their umbilical attachments to wider national and global identifications.

The section which follows provides a theoretical backdrop. It first addresses the emergence of modern understandings of citizenship, questioning assumptions of the human agent which this entails. In it, I consider how such understandings continue to resonate through contemporary conceptualizations of education and human rights discourses (which implicitly shape understandings of children's rights, and attendant ideas of respect and responsibilities), infusing the local, national and global. Through the lenses of particular theorists, I turn to post-structural apprehensions of the subject, constructed through 'difference'. These support theoretical interrogations of my rights based empirical data through which I seeks to illustrate how politics and the political are intrinsic to education; processes of subjectification and democratization. I conclude by arguing for an understanding

of 'politics' and 'the political' within education that does not posit either a 'required subject' or the foreclosure of 'the domain of the political' (Butler, 1995, p.36).

Theorising Education and the Subject

As my research intersects with ideas of citizenship and human rights, I start by briefly considering the origins of western understandings of citizenship and the citizen subject, where, from their ancient forms it is possible to encounter their potential to act in exclusionary ways. In Greek city- states, citizenship was reserved for male householders of independent means, for example, with their financial and household status underpinning their freedom to engage in civil and political spheres, from which children, women and slaves were excluded (Bingham et al, 2010). In its modern form, this separation of public and private spheres was also assumed in the understandings of citizenship associated with the emergence of Western liberal democracies from the 18th century onwards. Many feminist writers (e.g. Mouffe 1992; Honig, 1992) have critiqued the masculinist ontologies and epistemologies embedded within such thinking, and how these have resulted in the privileging of the strong individualism of the rational, autonomous subject, assumed to be male. Women, on the other hand, have been presupposed to suffer from inherent frailties, including suspect emotional tendencies which render them unfit to participate outside of the private, domestic sphere. As Butler (1992, p.12) eloquently illuminates, the autonomy supposedly achieved through man's rationality has always been illusory: a 'product of a disavowed dependency' and a denial of the very social relations through which the subject and such claims to autonomy have been constituted.

Engaging with the understandings of the subject in Kant (1992/1784), Bingham and Biesta (2010) draw out the powerful assumptions which have been sedimented together in Enlightenment thought i.e. man (sic) had a duty to use his reason to transcend his (unenlightened) state of immaturity, with education as the 'lever' through which to achieve this emancipation (Bingham and Biesta, 2010, p.28). The use of reason to arrive at 'truth' and emancipation has also depended crucially upon the premise that this could allow a separation of knowledge and power, and indeed that 'knowledge can only exist where the power relations are suspended' (Foucault, 1979, p.27). On the contrary, rather than being 'outside power', or 'the reward of free spirits', Foucault has pointed to truth as being 'a thing of this world', produced through and within regimes of truth, each with 'its 'general politics' of truth' (Foucault, 1984, pp.72-73).

Despite this, the logic of individual empowerment within liberal thought remains important in contemporary discussions of education. It also permeates the international human rights regimes developed in the aftermath of World War II, which have included the rights of the child and her right to education. However, whilst these claim to attend to the agency of the child, critics are concerned that the spaces opened may 'domesticate' ideas of child citizenship, confining education to a process of mere socialisation, rather than allowing for a contestation and revision of existing norms (Biesta, 2013). Pyckett (2007) highlights the instrumentalities which pervade ideas of 'common sense', consensual constructions of schooling discourses, and how these work to de-politicise the local, national and global policy contexts of education. Similarly, Balagopalan (2014) whose post-colonial theorisations

and ethnographies focus upon the everyday experiences of street children and child labourers in Calcutta, describes the global context of a liberal discourse of children's rights as not only de-politicising but also paradoxical. On the one hand, she suggests that ideals of children's agency are to be brought into being through the rally cry for their 'participation' and the assertion of their 'voice'…'as the site of transparent truth' (Balagopalan, ibid, p.128); and, on the other, their agency, as minors, is to be contained through the demands for their 'protection' and the ongoing maintenance of legal 'provisions' for their care.

Balagopalan (ibid) goes further in her reading of assumptions underpinning universalist ideals of liberal children's rights. She suggests that an implicit construction of the discourse is one that seamlessly marries assumptions of individuating rights alongside binary ideals of respect/responsibility. Here, respect is associated with normative bodily comportment and disposition, whilst responsibility becomes a 'critical indicator' (Balagopalan, ibid, p.132) of a particular moral economy, tempering possible spillages of enthusiastic enactments of participatory children's rights. This coupling of rights with respect/responsibility could be read as one mechanism for coping with the anxieties of hegemonic political power that focus minutely upon the morality of the psychologised individual and her behaviours, rather than upon the inherent inequalities of structures within society. Certainly, Balagopalan describes the subjectivities to be encultured in the liberal discourse as facets of the socialisation of the individuated citizen subject. For her, the focus of this educational project is upon the development of 'self-discipline, tolerance, the public use of reason, and the development of self-restraint', which works to secure the moral disciplining of the young body, fixing it in its place (ibid, p.132).

Mouffe (1992, p.370) also challenges the rationalities of the production of the liberal Enlightenment subject. She draws instead on post-structural theories of discourse which see the subject as being produced through demarcations of difference, within which some ways of being, speaking, doing, and thinking are recognised as legitimate, while others are not, within the 'politics of truth' of any society at any one time. This makes subject formation inherently political, shot through with contested, agonistic relations, in which constituent 'others' are always implicated. Butler's concept of performativity is particularly pertinent here. It allows for the consideration of the subject that is constantly in process. Indeed it animates the subject brought into being as an 'effect' of the re-citation of linguistic norms and signifying practices, rather than as s(he) who originates from a stable or essential subject, i.e. 'a doer before the deed' (Butler, 2006, p.34).

Rancière's concern with the *process* of politics as an integral dynamic of subject formation can be usefully deployed in this context. He describes politics and the political as a process of subjectification which is always about a 'disidentification, [a] removal from the naturalness of place' (Rancière, 1995a, p.36 in Bingham and Biesta, 2010, p.32). To operate, it requires the shifting of 'a body' from 'the place assigned to it [so that] it makes visible what had no business being seen and makes heard a discourse where once there was no place for noise' (Rancière, 1999, p.30 in ibid, p.34). Crucially, this idea embraces politics as a discourse of 'dissensus' which challenges consensus as an order in which everyone already has a place and an identity. Like Butler, who resists the claim of foundational philosophies as requiring a politically 'stable subject' (Butler, 1995, p.36), Rancière suggests dissensus as a process which can be generative of subject formation. In common with Foucault, Mouffe and

Butler, he sees such a process as one that 'does not happen before the act of politics but rather in and through it' (Rancière, 1999, p.40, ibid, p.36). For Rancière, subjectification and dissensus are *always* momentary, fleeting, and re-constituted processes within new political acts.

Overall, these critiques call attention to the 'mutually constitutive' relations between language and social life'(Dunne et al, 2005, p.93) in ways that I utilize in this chapter to populate the discourse analysis which informs my engagements with my empirical data. Here, I distinguish my theoretical approach as 'post-structuralist' as opposed to social constructionist by virtue of making claims beyond that which is 'brought into being by the discourses that name and shape' them where meanings are ascribed within particular contexts (Kehily, 2013, p.4). In my reading of post-structuralism, it is the search 'for the way in which meanings are put together' so that texts/contexts are forever in tension (Dunne et al, ibid, p.90) that becomes paramount. The effect of this approach is that discourse itself is as much about creating the speaker as vice-versa. In this way, post-structural discourse analysis allows for *more than* language. Rather, it focuses upon what language does and what it might make possible; as well as attending to its confusions and its contradictions. A post-structural approach presupposes different institutional positions from which people speak, with power relations suturing subjects to these positions. It formalises both researcher and researched within these dynamics also. This recognition of the power of language and my constitution as the author of this text and generator of the research (through discursive relations), provokes in me a concern to disrupt tacit constructions (MacLure 2010). These are the social constructions of ideas of rights, respect and responsibility as these make up, and are made up by, education and politics. Furthermore, in this chapter, I 'think *with* theory' in order to analyse my data (Jackson and Mazzei, 2012). I follow the example of Jackson and Mazzei to invite in post-structural theorisations to open up possibilities of what I might say.

Problematizing the Construction of Education, the '3Rs' and Politics

In the context of a wider research, I interrogated UNICEF UK's 'Rights Respecting Schools' framework (the RRS), using a Foucauldian Discourse Analysis. The RRS initiative is an award developed by UNICEF to put children's rights at the heart of schools' policies and practices. The award can be achieved at Level 1 and Level 2. The Discourse Analysis that I conducted was designed to deconstruct the RRS text in order to identify a range of dominant and subordinate discourses (conceptualisations of power and knowledge, constructions of 'objects' and 'subjects') that bring into being 'practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak' (Foucault, 1969, p.49). It was the deconstruction of some of these textual discourses that I went on to use to frame my interrogations of a range of enactments of rights in the English primary school. The RRS document was, and had been, assumed in the construction and enactment of policies and practices with a performative[1] dynamic, which had developed over a number of years in the school and which were born out

[1] I use 'performative' to mean 'that which gets done'. However, I also mean more than this, referring to institutional actions, in a more Butlerian (1997) sense to explore the way in which actions and identities both get done (and undone) within and through discourse and therefore also through the '3Rs' discourse shaped by power relations.

in the everyday 'doing' and 'being' of many school subjects. My researcher attention focussed particularly upon the utilisation and occupation of the physical space of the school, as well as the behaviours and expectations of the 'rights' subjects as I followed the way in which schooling discourses were played out. What was claimed for, and by, actors for this 'values-based' RRS project of democratic schooling? Top Hill Primary had achieved 'Level 1' of the RRS award and was working towards 'Level 2' which required it to demonstrate a range of rationalities, such as: 'The school has an inclusive and participatory ethos based on the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC[2]).

My ethnographic field work had taken place over a period of ten months in a variety of spaces: some were official such as classrooms and the assembly hall; and others were less formal, such as corridors, play areas and meeting rooms. On occasions, I was a participant-observer variously joining in with a range of school activities, such as working with groups of children on learning tasks, conducting 'playground duty', and generally helping with ancillary tasks. At other times, I had the leisure and privilege of watching. I documented my time in school with copious field-notes, fiercely scribbled at the time, and refined away from the field soon after. Towards the end of my fieldwork, I conducted some loosely structured individual and group interviews with a selection of research subjects which built on conversations we had had in the course of previous day-to-day interactions. My aim was to scrutinise everyday occurrences of school life, acknowledging that they could be understood in many different ways, all and none of which could be seen as 'true' (Laws, 2011, p.15) in ways consistent with my post-structural methodological approach. Like Laws, I also wanted to achieve a way of 'reading' the school in new ways in order to see things that may have been taken-for-granted previously.

In this chapter, I draw on vignettes of data (in a similar manner to MacLure, 2010) to problematize the way in which the RRS discourses negotiate the '3Rs' in three separate accounts, all of which call into question *processes* of democratisation and subjectification and ideas of politics and the political at work as part of this educational enterprise.

In my first vignette, I begin with some notes I made of an early ethnographic impression I had had of the school which captured something of the liberal logic of my sense of the discourse:

> *'Rights – they appear everywhere, both concretely, as well as, somehow, floating in the ether – not so much on their own – but coupled with 'respect', dressed up as 'responsibility': they're on the walls in UNICEF brightly coloured poster form; as 'home-made' school charters on the walls of corridors, classrooms, hallways, outside in the playground, on newsletters home, reminders of what can be expected ('you have the right to be heard, and 'you have the right to work' (and you have the responsibility to listen'…'and to let others get on with their work'…); in passing remarks between teachers and pupils, 'remember, it's lovely that we have the right to go out into the sunshine to play, but we have the responsibility not to disturb other children inside…' They feel invested in, by many, and in such a range of spaces within the school. They are a garment, not so much worn lightly, as with a mark of distinction…they are asking to be recognised and valorised. This is Top Hill Primary saying, 'Hey, this is what we're about…sit up and take notice'*…Rebecca's Notes, October 2011

[2] The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) was adopted by the United Nations in 1989 as a way of enshrining 54 universal articles to protect the rights of all young people under the age of 18 years of age.

Even at this early stage of my encounter with the school, I realized that I was reading the confounding double binary of both emancipatory rights (as they appear '*everywhere*' asking to be '*recognised*' and '*valorised*') alongside the more regulative and authoritative, responsibilities, (especially in the guise of the warnings of the teacher to her pupils as she orchestrates their subjectivities). There is a strong imperative to the teacher's demands: *'you have the right to be heard, and 'you have the right to work'…and you have the responsibility to listen'…'and to let others get on with their work'….* Here are respect and responsibility circulating as 'something that children are viewed as capable of and obliged to exercise' (Balagopalan, 2014, p.133). I read complex moral economies at work in such moments that demanded the dampening of any possible over exuberances of 'rightful' childish energies that might challenge what were deemed as appropriate behaviours by this teacher in the public space of the school corridor. As I moved around the school more, I began to take notice of the 'School Agreement' on display boards – in the staffroom, in classrooms, in corridors, in passageways, and in the playground. This reinforced my sense of the contractual nature of the '3Rs' discourse – respect/responsibility as antidote to the 'wrong' kind of rights, in which respect/responsibility is something that children are 'obliged to exercise' (Balagopalan, ibid, p.133):

> '*We All Have The Right to be listened to; to learn and play; to have healthy food; to be safe and well cared for; to be treated fairly and with respect; to be helped to be the best we can. We All Have The Responsibility: to listen to others; to let others play and learn; to make healthy choices; to take care of everyone; to be fair, kind, and respectful; to try and to encourage others.'* Rebecca's Notes, September, 2011

For many of the key players within the school, especially leaders and managers, an assertion of the '3Rs' as something 'new' was made manifest: as something different and empowering; something in opposition to the dominant mode of a 'Govian'[3] educational imperative with its attendant unabashed rhetoric of standards, discipline and control. For these school subjects, the '3Rs' was about developing an inclusive society within – and importantly - beyond the school, in which all were to play their part democratically, through which all could be accorded the rights of that democracy. This can be illustrated from discussions with the head teacher who explained what the '3Rs' meant to him. He talked a lot about a '*holistic approach*' to educating the whole child – about '*respect*' and *'listening'*. He drew attention to the '*School Agreement'*. He understood instantly what I meant about by locating *'values*' at a time of political change. He readily positioned himself within a liberal tradition of education as that associated with a process of developing well-rounded individuals. He suggested that he felt challenged by Gove's interpretation of education…

> '*We'll keep doing what we've been doing and developing our vision as long as we continue to get the results we get – really who can challenge us then?*' (Rebecca's Notes, June 2011).

Whilst I read this declaration from the head teacher as an acknowledgement of an integral relationship of national politics to education and his positioning in relation to this, I also sensed a certain closing down of difficulty and a distancing from the idea of 'politics' as an ongoing *process* of political contestation and subjectification (as explicated through my

[3] Michael Gove (Education Minister in the Conservative-Liberal Democrat government in England, 2010-2014). One of his prime foci was upon a drive to 'improve standards' in order to create an English education system that was globally competitive

theorisations of Mouffe, Butler and Rancière). I read his comments as the assertion of a discourse of 'standards' granting permission to a discourse of empowerment with conditions attached (*'As long as you do this, then you can be allowed to do that'*): not so much a radical commitment to change and more an imagining of progress towards a rational, utopian future.

On a separate occasion involving an interview between me and a different school manager with responsibility for the '3Rs' initiative, she expounded her commitment to a similar vision of a liberal orthodoxy of rights. She explained that she was 'passionate' about the 'journey' that the school was on. However, she seemed to warn me: this was *'not political, you know…'*. I interpreted these comments as defensive, although understandably so. I heard what she said as her way of being accountable both to me, but also perhaps to a wider, public audience (governors; parents; OFSTED – stakeholders; surveyors of schooling practices). I read this as similarly linked to the 'accountability discourses' of the head teacher as these related to standards. The subtext of both sets of remarks from both leaders seemed to declare: *'don't worry, we're not political you know…we are a 'safe pair of hands'*.

In Foucauldian terms (1979), it might be possible to read in this range of comments the productive effect of the power of the other dominant schooling discourses, seeping into the senior managers' needs to justify and remonstrate their defences of the 'journey' that they and the school community were on – a journey along an apparently non-contentious, non-political, rational path. These senior managers, whilst eloquently articulating a 'vision' of pupil empowerment, were also constrained by their requirements to negotiate, effectively and affectively, multiple discursive regimes which could not, and did not, stack up as components of an emancipatory discourse of rights.

More than this, however, it is possible to read the 'non-political' rhetoric of the '3Rs' as occupying the proclamatory terrain of what might be termed a 'post-ideological era' of politics, which has been identified as a national, strategic claim of the English government (Hall and O'Shea, 2013). This seeps into the transnational and global politics of liberal rights discourses as regulating experiences of freedom as Balagopalan (2014) has described in her research in the Global South. The effect of this is that education is required to be, as much as for any other public body, about seemingly 'common sense' goals: sound managerialism of a standards discourse and a 'fair society' (ibid): a consensus that for Rancière (2004) can only ever be about getting rid of the allure of politics – a 'closing the gap': consensus as 'the reduction of democracy to the way of life of a society' [as the 'already declared'] (Rancière, 2004, p.306). Considered in these terms, the discourse becomes more straight-forwardly incontestable, as about 'the Bleeding Obvious' (MacLure, 2010, p.3). It works as an empty unmarked sign of unity that doesn't need to be contested, that can be simply asserted as 'good' and which belongs to nothing or to no-one and that simply stands for everyone (Gedalof, 2013, p.9). It works to foreclose definitions and differentiation, so that '*rights and respect/responsibility'* are left merely as an apparent antidote to the worst excesses of a Govian vision of state education.

My second vignette concerns an incident connected to my attendance at one of the more formal events of democratic schooling, that of a Student Council Meeting to which I had been invited by the councillors, eighteen or so children between 6 and 11 years of age; and the Chair, the head teacher. I found myself focusing upon the identities of those constituted within the meeting. My record of the meeting ran as follows:

> *The room had an air of focused attention. I'm a little bit late and I feel embarrassed that the meeting has already begun. I apologise quietly and draw up a chair behind the group of councillors who are all seated around a large table in the centre of the rather cramped room. The Chair sits at one end. The meeting is underway and one young boy (possibly 6 or 7 years of age?) is talking seriously and comprehensively about what the 'Peer Mentors' do in the Infant Playground to help those children who are unhappy or who don't seem to be able to play with anyone else. He is expansive with his ideas about what else they might do to help ('make up more games') and what other toys they would like to have in the playground (more things to climb on')…He does draw breath at one point and turns to the child sitting next to him. He asks if she'd like to add anything… (She's tiny – again only 6 or 7 years of age). She shrugs and shakes her head by way of response and carries on with the sandwich she's eating from her lunchbox. He picks up from where he left off…I realise that I'm amazed by the courtesy: no-one interrupts…The small lad is amazingly articulate but he is Banging On and time is running out, surely? What if someone else has anything to add? This is an extraordinarily attentive (respectful?) environment…The head teacher looks at the speaker with rapt concentration. He takes this business seriously. Everyone seems to take this business seriously…(Do they?)…Some older children don't exactly look bored…but they don't look, either, as though they are having a Party. But they do 'carry' themselves well: they wear the expressions and comportments of Old Sages in council meetings from times immemorial…(Time goes on…I'm a bit bored actually: what an admission…I could have brought a sandwich, perhaps…bother…) I'm struck by how well all the councillors, 'take turns', indicating through the Chair that they wish to speak…I realise that the head teacher is taking notes of what is said, and reads back the actions to be taken to the children. He reminds them to report back the business of the meeting to their classes. They nod their assent. The Chair says he'll discuss their 'excellent' ideas with 'his staff' and report back at the next meeting…* Rebecca's Notes, Student Council Meeting, March 2012

In these ethnographic notes I have represented – ostensibly – what Biesta might describe as a 'lifting the veil' practice (Biesta, 2010, p.543). The Chair, in the form of the head teacher, explicates and demonstrates (through his performance) particular ways of becoming a rightful, respectful and responsibilized citizen, in order to demonstrate 'something to someone to show him he cannot understand it by himself' (Rancière, 1991, p.6). This seems to have the effect of 'fixing' particular identity constructions to the children present. I sensed that these had very little to do with the children's own crafting of themselves within their own embodiments of their ideas of 'responsibility' (Balagopalan, 2014). I was reminded here particularly, of a separate occasion during which a group of Year 5/6 children voiced certain frustrations to me about reminders to them from the head teacher in Assembly about how they should behave when OFSTED inspectors visited the school. These prompts involved re-articulations of the children's responsibilities as set out in the School Agreement. One child added to me– almost pleadingly – '*but we <u>do know</u> how to behave….*' In her own research in post-colonial India, Bagopalan (ibid) suggests that one effect of respect and responsibility rhetoric is to disregard other and 'more complex moral life-worlds' (ibid, p.137) of children outside and beyond the policing boundaries of the liberal rights discourse. Certainly, these children in Top Hill Primary seemed to suggest through these comments their own awareness and positionings within wider (non-bourgeois) discourses of 'responsibility' beyond the constraints of '3Rs'school disciplining.

Returning to the Council Meeting, the head teacher sat at the table in such a way that he could see everyone and everyone could see him. The room was small and everyone was required to sit closely together. There was no 'wriggle room'. He embodied close, quiet, intense concentration and attention. When he spoke he did so with a calm, quiet, low key, 'trust me' authority. The children appeared to mirror his embodied behaviours and disposition. As councillors seated around the table, they wore serious dispositions and took on 'respectful' identities as listeners, interlocutors and turn takers. They seemed to have internalised their civic lessons well: the Student Council meets every three weeks, or so, which means that this was probably the fourth meeting of the academic year that they have attended. They had had opportunities enough to rehearse these responsibilized subjectivities.

In Rancièreian terms, it would be possible to equate this performance with the parable of a 'world divided into knowing minds and ignorant ones' (Rancière, 1991, p.6). Such a reading would fundamentally challenge the idea of the 'emancipated' child subjects as presumed within the '3Rs' discourse. We might say that the task of the head teacher in this council meeting was to 'make visible what was hidden from those who were 'the object' of the emancipatory endeavours of the educator' (Biesta, 2010, p.26), such that the child subjects performed their roles as councillors in ways that did not, and were not required to, challenge pre-ordained routes to an orthodoxy of socialization and politicisation.

Drawing on the work of Foucault, we could survey this scene as part of the 'great carceral continuum' (Foucault, 1979, p.297) of the disciplined institution of the school (which feels especially intense given the confinement of the small room, the tightness of the space, with the head teacher in close proximity to all his pupils such that his gaze can fall upon every single one of the children at one and the same time so that he himself is very much the 'engineer of conduct', ibid, p.294). Nonetheless, the meeting was orchestrated in a nonchalant manner which still posed as non-surveillance – some children ate their sandwiches and sipped their drinks, for example. Arnot (2006), however, suggests that children's participation in activities such as this marks nothing other than a sense of weak civic agency. For her, children's subjectivities become just the mimicking of behaviours and embodiments of the heteronormative '*Old Sage*': this represents yet one more Foucauldian mechanism of socialisation and regulation within the educational institution of the school.

I also found myself pondering the 'politics' of difference in this Council Meeting by engaging with the theorisations of both Mouffe and Butler to think through what I had seen, asking myself: who is she; this rightful subject of the Student Council? In simple terms, we could say that, on this occasion, the 'she' was a 'he': it was boys who spoke and girls who listened. The seven year old boy performed, at length, with considerable acumen; an older boy responded to 'Any Other Business' and solicited the reactions of two girls around him who then provided some 'helpful' solutions to his queries about the provision of more 'Lego' for some classes for play sessions on a Friday afternoon. It was boys who constituted the '*voices*' of the participatory citizen of this liberal discourse and it was girls who, particularly respectfully and responsibly, remembered their places and came up with some answers. Here we had 'power forming the subject' (Butler, 1997, p.2) in such a way that it was masculine identities that prefigured the citizen subjectivities of this space so as to constitute them as foundational and apparently incontrovertible.

In a process of subject formation here, the mutual acts of recognition 'through which subjects accord each other the status of the viable subject' (Davies, 2006, p.427) meant that the boys were, unwittingly, encouraged to speak up and perform a masculinity with which they identified, and which was readily apprehended and taken up by the head teacher. However, I found myself amused by the behaviour of the seven year old girl who seemed to me to enact her agency on her own terms. Perhaps she had to listen to this charming young boy all too often and perhaps – for her – her silence and enjoyment of her lunch and her refusals were her way of ensuring the accomplishment of herself as a 'recognisable and thus viable subject' (Davies, ibid). Conversely, the two older girls who proffered responses during 'Any Other Business' seemed to fall into what Butler herself describes as 'temporal modalities' (Butler, 1997, p.14). Firstly, they conformed to a modality of gendered behaviour as demure, passive and polite, giving way to the older boy - 'always prior, outside of itself, and operative from the start' (ibid). Then, in responding as gendered 'fixers-of-problems' and 'do-ers', they came up with constructive suggestions of how to solve a matter of a lack of toys. In this way, they moved in to a second modality which was the 'willed effect of the subject [so that] subjection is a subordination that the subject brings on itself' (ibid). Within such subjection, Butler reminds us, lies the *possibility* for 'resistance and opposition'. But, I have to confess, that I failed to pick up such a possibility on this occasion.

My last vignette is set in a semi-official space of schooling. I was party to a focus group discussion between a group of eight ten and eleven year olds in which I invited them to: *'Tell me something about your Rights Respecting School'*. To begin with they had looked a little fidgety, embarrassed and bored: one girl shrugged, as much as to say, '*what is there to tell?'* In desperation I looked around the school hall in which we were gathered and pointed to one of the UNICEF 'Children's Rights' posters on the wall, displaying barely clad children under a free standing water pipe, arms raised, dousing themselves in a stream of water. The poster read: '*We have the right to be healthy*'. I asked why they thought they had posters like this – and others – around the school. The rather dry and unanimated responses ranged from: '*Cos like they're poor…'* to *'we need to help them get better stuff – like…it's their right'* and *'we're lucky because we live here and they're not and they need us to send money'*. When I pushed them a little further as to the purposes of the posters, they suggested it was *'to remind us to do kind things and to be responsible'*. Balagopalan (2014, p.137) has drawn on the work of Spivak (2005) to underscore the particular deployment of 'responsibility' (as a 'civilisational mode of human rights') at work in the constructions of rights in contexts such as this: In Balagopalan's reading of Spivak, we have presented the world divided into Top Hill School, (England) and 'Other'. Although Balagopalan draws her data from the Indian sub-continent, her observations of the travelling transnational and globalised discourses of human rights expressed the sentiment of the Top Hill Primary children as their belonging to a world in which they are required to be responsibilized in order to 'right wrongs', in opposition to, 'receiving groups, among whom wrongs proliferate'. However, I gained very little sense of anything other than their own sense of dutiful (and very polite) retort to my inquiries. This was until I moved further round the hall and pointed to a 'homemade' School Rights Charter, decorated by the children themselves. The group lit up instantly when I asked about it. My allusion to this poster generated sparks.

By way of a response, one child announced that '*Toilet Charters*' had started to appear on the doors to the junior school toilets. He pronounced this as, *'a joke'*. He didn't know where they came from or who made them. Another child remarked that she thought that someone had flushed one of the Toilet Charters, '*down the loo'*. This was greeted with barely contained delight by the assembled group, and a different child suggested gleefully: *'I mean…some of them* [the statements on the Toilet Charter] *are just so funny …'You have a right to feel safe and secure in the toilet'… 'It doesn't really happen so often* [that someone doesn't feel safe] *that you need to put a charter up!'*

At the time, I was struck by the contrasting responses of the children: their apparent disinterestedness in my questions about the UNICEF posters and a 'rehearsal' of what it was that they felt they were required to say; then the emergence of their quick-witted and strongly expressed feelings about the 'Toilet Charters'. They began to banter, including with me; and to poke fun (gently); to challenge one another (pretty kindly); to defend; and what is more, to pour scorn (in bucket loads) on a very well intentioned (and no-doubt, time and labour intensive) scheme designed to manage behaviour in the school toilets. This was clearly a 'performance' that was very different from the carefully crafted and politely regulated behaviour of the formal space of the Student Council. I felt that I had, suddenly sprung upon the children 'off message' and 'off duty'.

In Butlerian terms, here were alternative citational acts being played out contesting 'the coherence of the 'I'' (Butler, 2004, p.376) which were of a different order to the rather tired responses of the children to the UNICEF posters, and to their gendered performative acts of the respectful and responsible citizen subject in the Student Council. In this regard they amplified the way in which gender is never either a 'stable identity or a locus of agency from which various acts proceed' (Butler, 1988, p.519). For example, it was a ten year old girl who asserted that the Toilet Charter didn't need to be written down and who then continued to take part in the ensuing discussion: 'i*t sounds like a joke but they – the teachers - mean it to be really serious. But like we could ask the builders to mend the doors so – like – no one can mess with them: maybe we could ask them when they're here doing other stuff?'* This seemed to be a subversive interjection in which she contested the assertion and implementation of the '3Rs' discourse on her behalf in such a way that in that moment, her 'power pervades the very conceptual apparatus that seeks to negotiate its terms' (Butler, 1995, p.39). With its satirical and sardonic overtones and light, yet purposive enactment, this felt to me to be, again, in Butler's own words, 'the very precondition of a politically engaged critique' (ibid) with a dynamic quality. Here were enactments of agency that contrasted markedly to formalised ideals of respect and responsibility: non-contractual, non-commodified and more social than the dominant idiom of responsibility as previously displayed. Balagopalan (2014) suggests that these 'half-archived' and 'less rational' modes of spontaneous being are barely acknowledged within the dominate mode of the emancipatory discourse of the '3Rs'.

These children did not wish to recognise this charter as theirs: they were delighted that one child had, allegedly, taken it upon herself to '*flush it down the loo'*. On that basis, at least, this seemed to be a different order of citizenship to that pre-ordained by the teacher leading her children through the corridor; or the head teacher talking earnestly to his captive audience in the Council Meeting; or me eliciting bored responses from the children to my time worn questions. In this regard, the engagement with 'the Toilet Charter' was a signifying 'political'

act, which in Rancièreian terms could be said to be one of disidentification: 'dissensus' challenging consensus as 'an order' that is '*all-inclusive*…; [so] that there is an identity for everyone' (Bingham and Biesta, 2010, p.34). Rather dissensus emerges here as a *process* which generates subjectivity. It is fleeting and re-constituted within new political acts which, for Rancière, are always about 'undetermined political processes' (Biesta, 2011, p.141). We could therefore suggest that this emanated from an epistemological construction of these children as agents who could speak up for themselves on their own terms and, on this occasion, posit their own ideas of rights, respect and responsibility. And crucially, it shifted the balance of this '3Rs' discourse of schooling (momentarily) from one of mere generator of pre-figured citizenship identities to one of the 'producer of political subjectivities' (Biesta, 2011, p.150).

Conclusion

This chapter grew out of wider ethnographic research on discourses that emerged from a Foucauldian Discourse analysis of a RRS text which, in turn, shaped the enactment of ideals of rights, respect and responsibility in one English school. In this chapter, specifically, I have illuminated education and politics, intersected with understandings of liberal discourses of the '3Rs'. The discourses are broadly assumed to be apart from, or beyond, the political and the politics of discourses of schooling which are non-contingent and necessitated upon the engagement of already fully-imagined and socialised identities. I have been struck in my re-readings of these empirical data by just how United Nations frameworks of rights travel through different spaces and temporalities to become 'plugged in' (borrowing an expression coined in Jackson and Mazzei, 2012), regardless of context, to dominant common-sensical ideas of democratic education as rational, consensual and predetermined. My methodological engagements suggest, therefore, that there is an imperative to ask questions of the *process* of the construction of the school subject of this liberal discourse (Pelletier, 2009), of adults and children alike, as well as of the political and educational meanings of these universal and universalising discourses. In other words, we should address seriously the 'consequentiality of taking the subject as a requirement or presupposition of theory' (Butler, 1995, p.36) which runs the risk of silencing young voices, especially in democratic contexts where they are actively 'invited' to speak and be heard.

Rather than empowered and entitled, there were clearly points in the data where children especially performed the rational mode of the liberal '3Rs' discourse in ways that could only ever serve up a diet of a restricted agency. Nonetheless, I was also somewhat encouraged by the way in which some data suggested that there is *always* some youthful scope for dissensual 'breaking out' in ways that mean that: '(t)he deconstruction of identity is not the deconstruction of politics; rather, it establishes as political the very terms through which identity is articulated' (Butler, 2006, p. 203).

In concluding this chapter, I take forward some implications of the argument that politics (or as Mouffe would say, the political) are intrinsic to education, as a process of subjectification. Firstly, however, having critiqued the instrumentalities of a discourse of education which pretends to be outside of politics, I neither seek to provide recipes for action, nor to deny the possibility of agency. Rather than giving primacy to theories of education,

which aim to facilitate 'learning processes' and make these more effective, I argue with others such as Biesta (2013) and Pyckett (2007) for the importance within 'educational' processes of taking the work of social construction seriously. This implies, in turn, the problematization of the 'naturalness' of educational processes and their contemporary allure of innocent beneficence. This also requires recognition of the agonistic rather than consensual relations through which our subjectivities can be constructed. And finally, it may also mean that alongside attention to the structures of inequality through which differences are articulated (such as gender, social class, age relations), the moments of dissensus rather than consensus are those that hold more fertile possibilities for the disruption of the 'bleeding obvious', and for the coming into being of new subjectivities. These not only challenge the taken-for-granted discourse of the '3Rs' but they also highlight inherent ideas of politics and the political as forever poised to diffuse through processes of education, democratisation and schooling.

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Communicative Methodology of Research and Evaluation: A Success Story

Aitor Gómez

This chapter focuses on the contributions of the Communicative Methodology of Research to the development of a participatory research process in education which has allowed for the identification of educational actions that lead to school success. Once these actions were determined, successful actions of evaluation were discovered, and these are also based on a communicative paradigm.

I first focus on Communicative Methodology, its main theoretical references and leading principles, as well as its role in the creation of scientific knowledge in contemporary society, which is characterized by increasingly dialogic processes. The context of a particular case study is then explained. This is the case of a school which managed to transform its situation from poor educational results and high levels of absenteeism and conflict, to having the first class graduate in secondary education in the neighborhood.

This context will serve as background for the following sections, which will deal on one hand, with the implementation of Communicative Methodology of research in this case study. On the other hand, this case will work to explain how it informed a particular type of evaluation which contributed to school success.

Communicative Methodology in the context of the dialogic turn of societies and social sciences. Theoretical basis and postulates

> *"From here I want to say to all the parents and children of the world that if we had the misfortune of being poor and living in difficult areas, we can also change because we need it, society can see how we can get out of poverty"*(Manuel, a father from La Paz school, speaking at the European Parliament in December 2011).

This statement was made by a father who is a member of a school studied as a successful case in a research project conducted using Communicative Methodology of research. For four years, dialogues held with people such as this man, were founded upon the communicative perspective, which allowed for the identification of educational actions that promote school success and greater social cohesion in disadvantaged contexts (Flecha & Soler, 2013). In addition, we were able to identify a particular orientation in the evaluation processes that were carried out in the school and that proved to be particularly successful. Communicative Methodology of research involves active participation by end-users during the research process (Gómez, Elboj & Capllonch, 2013). In the case analyzed here, teachers, parents, other community members and students were providers of information and also participated in the analysis carried out and the dissemination of the results. They were key actors in the communication of the main conclusions to relevant stakeholders such as the Members of the European Parliament, and had the ultimate aim of improving the lives of other people like themselves.

Dialogue and communication are starting to assume an increasingly more important role in human relations and knowledge creation. Social science researchers have studied the dialogic turn of societies (Aubert & Soler, 2006). They have identified social contexts and relationships formerly based on power relations and authority that have moved on to use incorporated dialogue to reach agreements. Examples of this dialogic turn can be found in contexts as different as the management of companies, participatory budgets and households. Dialogue has been identified as the central component that is necessary for understanding human learning. It is present in educational interventions that contribute to educational success in diverse contexts (Racionero & Padrós, 2010). Dialogic learning (Flecha, 2000) stipulates that learning is an interactive process of knowledge construction that is always social, and which is mediated by dialogic discourse (Wells, 1999). The contributions of authors such as Vygotsky (1978), Mead (1934), Bruner (1996), Bakhtin (1986), Freire (1970) and Wells (1999) support the importance of interactions and dialogue for learning purposes. These theories conceptualize learning as situated activity in communities of practice (Lave & Wegner, 1991), where individuals engage in cultural actions through guided participation (Rogoff, 1990).

If both social reality and knowledge are created through communicative interaction, a research methodology that seeks to study social and educational reality needs to consider this fact. In other words, if we make meaning by engaging in dialogic interaction with others, we should approach the development of scientific knowledge along the same lines. Communicative Methodology (Gómez, Puigvert & Flecha, 2011) is consistent with the dialogic turn of society and social sciences. It uses egalitarian dialogue between researchers and research participants as the main tool for the creation of knowledge, which as a result of contrasting knowledge from the life-world of the research participants with that from the science world, ends up being more comprehensive and able to inform the transformation of social problems.

Dialoguing is thus central to Communicative Methodology, both ontologically and epistemologically. Research design, data collection, and data analysis are parts of research where egalitarian dialogue with the groups being researched is deliberately facilitated in order to achieve an inter-subjective understanding of the object studied. Finally, dialogue is also reflected at the level of the specific methods or techniques employed for data collection and analysis. Communicative Methodology implements qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques, which are always founded upon a communicative orientation.

Another main feature of Communicative Methodology is that it is not oriented towards describing or understanding reality, but rather towards transforming it. The debate between normative and descriptive science has been overcome. There is general agreement in the international scientific community regarding the role of social sciences research in serving the public good. Communicative Methodology is a tool used in social science research for achieving that service aim. This transformative dimension is closely related to the premise that only in the inter-subjective process of knowledge creation can all perspectives be contrasted and truly integrated so that a more accurate understanding of the reality studied can be achieved, and also to the fact that data analysis always includes features that oppress or exclude certain individuals and groups as well as factors that help overcome

discrimination (Valls & Padrós, 2011). The latter can become the basis for the development of transformative social action.

In that sense, the communicative data analysis is always twofold to identify exclusionary and transformative dimensions. The exclusionary dimension refers to elements that reproduce inequalities and the transformative one focuses in those aspects aiming at overcoming these inequalities. Barriers encountered by social actors to fully participate in several social areas as evaluation in education, are analyzed as exclusionary. Instead, the alternatives to those barriers that provide insights to overcome social, political, cultural and economic inequalities, are identified as transformative. In that sense, every exclusionary element that we find in the data analysis is related to a transformative one. The communicative data analysis always include the voice of those traditionally voiceless in the process of establishing which information could be exclusionary or transformative. Therefore, the collective interpretation is aiming to be more effective for social transformation (Pulido, Elboj, Campdepadrós & Cabré, 2014; Gómez, Puigvert & Flecha, 2011; Gómez, Latorre, Sánchez & Flecha, 2006).

This can be illustrated using the cases of the research projects WORKALO and INCLUD-ED. WORKALO: *The creation of new occupational patterns for cultural minorities: the gypsy case*, funded under the 5th Framework Programme of Research of the EU (2001-2004), used Communicative Methodology to analyze the situation of the Roma in Europe. Dialogues between the Roma, policy-makers, researchers, and various stake-holders, from the beginning of the project until its very end, and focused on the research results, led to the recognition of the Roma people as a European minority from the European Parliament[1]. INCLUD-ED: *Strategies for inclusion and social cohesion in Europe from education*, funded under the 6th Framework Programme of Research of the EU (2006-2011), implemented Communicative Methodology in order to analyze educational actions that lead to educational and social exclusion, as well as those that lead to educational and social inclusion. Some of the findings from this research, concrete Successful Educational Actions (SEA), have been included in five European resolutions and recommendations[2]. As a result of its scientific, social and political impact, INCLUD-ED was the only project in Social Science and Humanities (SSH) among the ten selected "success stories" from the Research Framework Programme. It has become a model of how to conduct SSH research that is effective in responding to social needs. Data discussed in this chapter comes from one of the case studies conducted for the INCLUD-ED project (European Commission, 2011).

The importance of dialogue in research methodologies has also reached the field of evaluation. Literature in that field has come to emphasize the importance of dialogue, communication and the inclusion of a diversity of voices in evaluation. The review of research on evaluation between 1986 and 2005 conducted by Johnson, et al. (2009) observed

[1] European Parliament resolution on the situation of the Roma in the European Union. European Parliament, P6_TA-PROV(2005)0151

[2] European Parliament resolution of 2 April 2009 on the education of children of migrants (2008/2328(INI))
European Parliament resolutions of 9 March 2011 on the EU strategy on Roma inclusion (2010/2276(INI)
Council conclusions of 11 May 2010 on the social dimension of education and training (2010/C135/02)
Communication from the EC (January 2011) on Tackling early school leaving: A key contribution to the Europe 2020 Agenda. Council Recommendation on policies to reduce early school leaving (June 2011) (10544/11).

the expansion of participatory evaluation methods over time, and those having greater positive influence upon individuals, programs and communities. This has led scholars in this field to conclude the importance of stakeholder involvement in facilitating evaluation. According to the authors, stakeholder involvement improves the use and impact of evaluation by supporting more informed decision-making, engagement, interaction and communication between stakeholders and evaluators. Mertens (1999) defined *inclusive evaluation* as the process that assesses the merit or worth of a program relative to the facilitation of social change for the more disadvantaged. She highlights several important topics to be taken into account in this regard: 1) the list of those who will be evaluated must be inclusive and representative of the diversity of stakeholders, particularly those who are normally under-represented in evaluation; 2) the inclusion of these voices is necessary for the achievement of a rigorous evaluation, which contributes to the avoidance of bias; 3) it is based upon a transformative theoretical perspective (Mertens, 2009), which assumes that knowledge is not neutral and its construction should seek to improve society, and particularly the lives of marginalized groups. According to Mertens (2009), inclusive evaluation is more sensitive, collects more information, which increases its impartiality and objectivity, and therefore leads to conclusions that respond better to reality and can inform more efficient actions. It also turns evaluation into a more moral and ethical process, because it takes into account power relations and attempts to compensate for it through transparency and power sharing.

There exist tensions between the participatory and technocratic approaches to evaluation, which have also been analyzed (Chouinard, 2013). Whereas the latter focuses on accountability requirements, the first captures contextualized meanings and culturally relevant perspectives. The level and extent of stakeholders' involvement, the diversity that exists among the stakeholders and the level of control of the evaluator characterizes *participatory evaluation*.

Communicative Methodology of research shares common principles with the inclusive and participatory perspectives on evaluation. It has informed a new approach to evaluation: Communicative Evaluation. This evaluation approach agrees with Mertens' position (2009) that evaluation in education aims to accurately assess the efficacy of the actions that are implemented. This will also benefit from including the contributions – knowledge and interpretations – from the various social agents involved in the evaluation process. Using a communicative orientation in research reveals the exclusionary components of reality that exclude certain groups or individuals from school success and social inclusion. It also reveals the transformative ones that overcome such barriers. Applying this orientation to evaluation allows for the transfer of the same process to daily educational practices.

The premises of Communicative Methodology are explained below. These premises describe the relationship between researchers and the end-users of research, and can be transferred to a communicative orientation of evaluation in education.

Universality of language and action

This premise takes into account that language and action are inherent abilities of human beings. Every person has the ability to interact and communicate with other people (Habermas, 1984). Teachers, educational professionals, parents, relatives, community

members and students have the capacity to express their opinions about the educational activities in which they participate and share it with others. This implies that they possess the capacity to reflect with other educational agents about the education of their children. In the communicative approach to evaluation, this premise is manifested in meetings with parents and other community members who engage in dialogues with teachers, other education professionals, and researchers, to reflect upon the school project, vision, and actions, and the outcomes. All of the participants in this dialogue have equivalent language and action capabilities and, thus have the same opportunities to engage in evaluative dialogues.

People as transformative social agents

The human capacity to reflect and engage in dialogues based on inter-subjective processes allow them to interpret social realities and social structures that impact them, and go on from there to initiate transformative action. Social agents that intervene in education have the capacity to reflect upon it and understand the structures in which they are immersed and identify elements that can be transformed. This echoes Freire's (1970) theory of dialogic action. He stated that every word has two dimensions (reflection and action). It also echoes Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural theory of learning and development. Vygotsky (1962, 1978) saw language as the main symbolic tool which aids cognitive development. Language has this power because it allows people to interact with each other and engage in actions that transform nature. This in turn transforms our psychology. Therefore, our nature is oriented towards transformation and not towards adaptation to biological limitations (Bruner, 2012).

Regarding communicative evaluation, this premise means that all educational agents have the ability to reflect on education and –when certain conditions are met in the dialogic interaction- to collaboratively create proposals of intervention to change educational problems into possibilities of success among children and youth.

Communicative rationality

Communicative rationality involves using language to reach mutual understanding and agreements (Habermas, 1984), unlike instrumental rationality, which uses language to achieve certain goals. Language and action are considered to be universal abilities, because all people can engage in dialogue based on communicative rationality. Different participants in evaluation share the same aim: improving the school's educational provision and children's learning. When teachers, parents, principals, and other community members engage in dialogues to evaluate schools, they have the objective of improving learning of all students and they do not seek personal goals over gains for the whole school community. Although their ideas and arguments might be different, they share the aim of serving the educational needs of all students.

Common sense

This refers to the subjective meaning attributed to actions, based on experiences and depending on context. Human development is founded upon cultural contexts that give meaning to thoughts and action (Roberts & Rogoff, 2012; Rogoff, 2003). When evaluation processes are open to end-users, the analyses are enriched because the views of professionals are complemented by the common sense and background knowledge of the community

members. This will often imply developing interpretations different than what the researchers conceptualized in isolation.

The disappearance of the premise of an interpretative hierarchy

Communicative Methodology of research understands that the interpretations of end-users evolve from their life experiences and common sense. By contrast, the interpretations of researchers derive from the science system, and can be equally valid in terms of describing the reality under study. Both viewpoints are equally needed when analyzing social and educational problems. The traditional supremacy of researchers' interpretative arguments may disappear in the absence of a hierarchy. This principle implies that, in communicative evaluation, interpretations by a non-academic mother are equally valued by everyone involved in the evaluation process. It is important here to move from the premise of interpretative hierarchy to actual egalitarian interactions between educational agents with different status levels in school structures (Searle & Soler, 2004). This connects with the following premise of communicative methodology.

Equal epistemological level

One consequence of the previous premise is that researchers and those who are being researched participate on an equal footing in the research process. Their contributions are different –researchers provide prior research and scientific knowledge, while the end-users provide their experiences. Both are equally necessary and important for developing better and more accurate analyses of the objects of study. In the case of evaluation in education, the communicative perspective entails that all evaluative arguments, regardless of whether they emerge from professionals, relatives or community members, are equally valid and necessary and must be discussed.

Dialogic knowledge

Communicative Methodology of research is based on the idea of inter-subjectivity, and overcomes the dual perspective of objectivity vs subjectivity. Reality and knowledge exist in objects themselves, independent of the people who experience and reflect upon reality, and in human interpretations of reality. Knowledge develops within interactive process between individuals and groups, and is influenced by the environments in which people experience and make meaning out of reality (Flecha, 2000; Mercer, 2000; Wells, 1999). If we start with the assumption that we accumulate knowledge through dialogue (Howe & Abedin, 2013), then any process of knowledge construction, such as evaluation, is grounded in dialogue. In communicative evaluation this premise implies that dialogism among diverse agents contributes to more accurate evaluations of educational processes and outcomes because it integrates additional voices, perspectives, and views (Oliver, de Botton, Soler & Merrill, 2011).

La Paz School in La Milagrosa neighborhood: A Success Story

La Paz is a school of pre-primary and primary education located in La Milagrosa neighborhood, a poor area in the outskirts of Albacete, Spain. This neighborhood is primarily inhabited by Roma and immigrant people. It was created in the 1970s to house the inhabitants of a former shantytown, which was later dismantled. The neighborhood has since then been characterized by marginalization, poverty, high unemployment, unstable jobs, low levels of education and generally precarious living conditions, including houses that do not meet minimal living standards. The limited number of employment opportunities primarily consists of temporary and irregular jobs, such as selling scrap iron. About one- third of working-age people depend on public welfare. Among the adult population, 7% are illiterate and the 79% have not completed elementary school (Ministry of Education, Social Policy, and Sports, 2008).

This context of social exclusion was aggravated by the children's poor educational outcome: high rates of school failure and student absenteeism, and conflicts between students, teachers and families. Neither teachers, nor families believed that children and youths in La Milagrosa could succeed in school and enjoy a better future than their parents (Padrós, Garcia, de Mello & Molina, 2011).

The situation began to change dramatically when certain actions were implemented as a result of transforming the school into a Learning Community (Gatt, Ojala, & Soler, 2011). These actions had the common feature of involving the students' families and other community members in core aspects of the school functions and counting on their participation in egalitarian dialogue. Whatever contributions they were able to make to improve their children's educational prospects were welcome, irrespective of their very low educational level. Some family members were illiterate and many had only gone to school for a couple of years. In a short period of time, both learning outcomes and coexistence improved significantly.

This process of improvement was studied as part of the research project *INCLUD-ED. Strategies for inclusion and social cohesion in Europe from education* (European Commission's 6th Framework Programme, 2006-2011). It was initiated by a research consortium of fifteen universities and research institutions from fourteen European countries. INCLUD-ED analyzed educational strategies that contribute to social cohesion and educational strategies that lead to social exclusion, in the context of European knowledge-based societies by providing key elements and action lines for improving educational and social policies. The project was divided into six sub-projects, each of which targeted specific objectives: 1) analysis of the characteristics of school systems and of educational reforms that generated low rates of educational and social exclusion and of those that generated high rates; 2) analysis of the components of educational practices that decrease rates of school failure and practices that increase them; 3) study of the way educational exclusion affects diverse areas of society (i.e. employment, housing, health, political participation) and of the kinds of educational provision contribute to overcoming it; 4) investigation of educational exclusion affecting diverse sectors of society, particularly the most vulnerable groups (i.e. women, youth, migrants, cultural groups and people with disabilities), and of the kinds of educational provisions contributing to overcoming discrimination; 5) analysis of mixed interventions between educational policy and other areas of social policy and identification of those

overcoming social exclusion and building social cohesion in Europe; 6) the study of communities involved in learning projects that have integrated social and educational interventions and have contributed towards reducing inequalities and marginalization, and fostering social inclusion and empowerment.

Deprived communities and schools such as La Milagrosa and La Paz require research that goes beyond describing their exclusion and marginalization. Although understanding what led to these problems is necessary, it is insufficient to allow them to escape a ghetto situation. Schools and communities such as La Paz require a research methodology that provides findings useful for transforming their reality. These schools also need research that identifies the methods of evaluation that best contribute to improving the academic results of all of their students.

Communicative Methodology was implemented in INCLUD-ED with the aim of identifying the actions that contributed to overcoming educational and social exclusion in successful schools across Europe. The result was that a series of Successful Educational Actions (SEA) were identified (Valls & Padrós, 2011). The research showed that these actions produced two results: improved academic achievement for all students and strengthened social cohesion. This occurs in a diversity of socio-economic and socio-cultural contexts. After identifying these SEAs, many schools in Europe and South America are now applying them and developing better futures for children, youths, and their families.

The implementation of Communicative Methodology of Research to identify Successful Educational Actions

La Paz school was one of six schools selected from across Europe which fulfilled three characteristics: a) a demonstrated contribution to school success as reflected by students' educational attainment in comparison with other schools with similar socio-cultural and socio-economic contexts; b) serving students with low SES and of minority backgrounds; c) counting on strong community involvement.

In each school, a four-year case study was conducted using a longitudinal perspective. Each year entailed a round of data collection and analysis. Different data collection techniques were used, including communicative, qualitative and quantitative techniques, and this was always with a communicative orientation. The different techniques and profiles of participants (teachers, students, relatives and other community members) promoted greater reliability for the findings. Data was collected using the following data collection techniques.

Standardized open-ended interviews

Thirteen standardized open-ended interviews were conducted in order to collect the opinions and views that participating social agents had about the local study project. Five of them involved representatives of the local administration working in different areas of society, other five were representatives of other community organizations associated with the school, and three were professionals working similarly in the local project. This qualitative technique was implemented with a communicative orientation. This means that the technique was used not from an instrumental perspective but rather from a communicative one, based on the postulates of the communicative methodology.

Communicative daily life stories

The communicative daily life story entails a cooperative process between the researcher and the subjects of research with the objective of reaching an understanding. This understanding is the result of interactions between the interviewers and the interviewees, who, throughout the dialogue, reflect upon and interprets their daily lives. The communicative daily life story focuses the study on the current interpretations of the narrators about their lives. It is a cooperative process of understanding of the interviewees' life-worlds, in which both participants share their knowledge and perspectives. This is the scientific community perspective in the case of the researcher. This is the personal experience perspective, in the case of those "researched." Thirteen communicative daily life stories were conducted with end-users: seven with students and six with family members. This technique allowed for the collection of the experiences of family members and students as participants at the local project (Aubert, Melgar, & Valls, 2011).

Communicative focus group

The communicative focus groups allow, on one hand, the comparison between the individual subjectivity of the interviewee with that of the group. On the other hand, its communicative orientation facilitates obtaining information from the researched individuals' life-worlds and the achievement of further meaningful data. It entails creating the conditions for egalitarian dialogues between people who belong both to the group being studied and the researcher. This is done to develop a collective interpretation of the topic consisting of existing scientific knowledge and participant knowledge. The communicative perspective refers to groups being natural and not artificially created for some purpose. This allows for collective reflection upon a reality that is known and regularly shared by the participants. One communicative focus group was conducted with professionals working on the local project. These groups included teachers, advisors, social educators and other professionals. Each group comprised between six and ten people (Rué, Martínez, Flecha & Álvarez, 2014).

Communicative observations

The communicative observations complemented the interviews and the communicative focus groups by direct observations of the reality being studied. Communicative observation is different than traditional observation. The person who observes other individuals or individuals, i.e. the subject/s of the observation, shares with them meanings and interpretations of their actions, attitudes, and motivations. The observer does this in order to achieve an intersubjective interpretation of the situation being observed. Five communicative observations were conducted in spaces where community participation could take place, such as school boards, assemblies, exhibitions, conferences, decision making spaces, and working committees (Gómez, Puigvert & Flecha, 2011).

Questionnaires

Two questionnaires were designed, and were addressed to the two different groups in question: family members and students. The main objective of the two questionnaires was to analyze their impressions, opinions and perceived impact of the actions implemented in the

school, in terms of contributing to reducing or preventing inequalities and marginalization, and fostering social inclusion and empowerment. The communicative orientation was implemented as a quantitative technique throughout the process of elaboration of the tool. Such communicative orientation implied conducting a pilot study prior to the administration of the questionnaire, where the appropriateness of the questions was discussed with end users.

Analysis of records and documents

The information collected through the aforementioned data collection techniques was complemented and contrasted with an analysis of school documents, including reports, documents about the background of the project, and records about students' attainment and yearly registration. Special attention was paid to the results of external evaluations of students' performance conducted by the educational administration.

One important feature of the data collection techniques used under Communicative Methodology was that the participants' knowing about the objective of the research in which they are part of right from the start. Awareness of study's objective is understood as enhancing the objectivity of the research. Therefore, this methodological perspective requires participants to understand why they are being interviewed. Being aware of the importance of the research conducted and that the findings may improve their lives and those of others can help research participants (teachers, family members, students, etc.) provide better and more accurate information (Puigvert, Christou, & Holford, 2012).

The different data collection techniques were intended to provide a longitudinal analysis of educational actions that contribute to school success and social cohesion. Along the four years, each round of data collection builds on previous findings, and aims at progressively focusing on the concrete components and consequences of successful actions. This is why a different research question was defined for each round.

The first round focused on identifying educational actions which contribute to greater social cohesion and better academic outcomes through community participation. The second year focused on the dimensions of community involvement, and involved identifying each form of community involvement. This included family and community education, community participation in decision-making processes, participation in the development of the curriculum and evaluation, and participation in classrooms and learning spaces, referring to its main characteristics, the improvements achieved, and the strategies used in these practices. The focus of study during the third year was the connection between the practices of community involvement in the school and the educational impact on performance, in both academic and non-academic aspects (e.g. coexistence). Finally, the fourth year focused on the impact the school had on the neighborhood, in terms of housing, health, employment, life-long learning, empowerment and social cohesion.

At each data collection time point instruments were modified according to the specific research question raised. The same people from the school and the community participated in the collection of data. The annual dialogues held with the end-users helped building upon the findings of previous years.

Reflection and intersubjective knowledge creation were promoted in the different meetings of researchers, teachers, students, and family and community members through the

Communicative Methodology employed. In the dialogues, the participants went beyond reflecting on the present situation of the school; researchers and the research participants also engaged in joint assessment of the school's progress. This assessment involved the different parties evaluating the impact of the actions implemented upon the students' academic achievement and he improvement of coexistence. The ultimate goal of this joint evaluation was not listing what did not work, but to plan new actions with the ultimate goal of improving school success and social inclusion. Communicative Methodology thus contributes to a communicative evaluation of educational practices and projects within the research process itself.

Identification of five types of family and community involvement in education: involving the community in reflecting upon effective community involvement in education

One key contribution of the INCLUD-ED project was the identification of five different types of family and community involvement in schools. More importantly, INCLUD-ED shed light on three of the five types that influence student academic achievement. Below are the results for the educative types of family and community involvement in education which show how the communicative methodology promoted reflection among participants and facilitated their assessment of the benefits of educative participation in schools.

Family and community involvement in learning activities

Educative participation consists of the participation of adult relatives and other adults in the community in students' learning activities, as well as their own educative activities. The analysis conducted in La Paz school shows that this type of family and community participation transformed the learning environment of children. More specifically, in a short period of time, they improved their learning outcomes, according to official tests developed by the regional government, and absenteeism markedly decreased. Evidence of learning improvement can be seen by analyzing the average scores (in the standardized tests of academic achievement) of the students in 2nd grade in 2006-2007 and those in 3rd grade in 2007-2008. Students' performance improved for the six linguistic skills assessed during this period. In 2006-2007, performance for these skills were, on average, below 2 (over 5) and just one year later, after implementing Successful Educational Actions, all of these indicators increased significantly. Students doubled their scores in almost all categories. As regards absenteeism, the figures reached the 30% level in 2006-2007. In 2007-2008 it shrank to 10%. In 2008-2009, it occurred only occasionally (INCLUD-ED, 2006-2011).

Interactive Groups (Valls & Kyriakides, 2013) is a successful educational action that La Paz implemented. Classroom organization consists of relatives and other community members entering the school classrooms to help small heterogeneous groups of students work together in instrumental learning activities. They are not in charge of explaining the curricular contents but of promoting dialogue among students to help each other solve problems successfully (Elboj & Niemelä, 2010). This is a form of educative family and community

participation in the school that has proved to be very effective in terms of supporting students' learning and achievement.

Communicative daily life stories were used to trigger children's reflections about how interactive groups improved their learning process. Lucía, a Roma girl, explained, on the one hand, how Interactive Groups promote solidarity and cooperation, and encourages peers in the classroom to help each other:

> *Ah! In a group, and what do you do? So how do you work [together]?*
> *Between two [students], me and Mada, Mada helps me, I help her, Rafi helps Ramonchi, Ramonchi helps Rafi.*

On the other hand, Lucía accounted for the positive impact of having additional adults in the classroom:

> *How much do you learn when there are other people in the classroom? A lot. Why?*
> *Because I'm not used to [having] lots of people there and when they explain things to me it stays in my head.*

Dialogues between researchers, family members and teachers added more layers of evaluation to the type of community involvement in the school that was more beneficial for improving student achievement. Communicative daily life stories with relatives and standardized open-ended interviews with teachers shed light on other elements of interactive groups which they believed enhanced learning.

For example, a teacher in La Paz reflected that, given her observations on the interactive dynamics in her classroom, she realized that including families in Interactive Groups increases children's efforts and motivation. Therefore, the teacher evaluated this family involvement in the classroom as positive because it had a positive impact on children's learning outcomes:

> *Specifically the parents who participated in Interactive Groups (…) you could see that their daughter or son became involved, made an effort, became motivated, helped the others, were incorporated into the dynamic… becoming very productive children. Given this, their involvement is very positive.*

At different points during data collection, family members evaluated their involvement in the school through their own personal experiences with supporting the learning experiences of their children in school. These adults evaluated their educational participation in positive ways, and pointed to specific aspects as reasons for their positive evaluations. They reflected that the children behaved better and were more focused on their learning activities when family members were in the classroom. For example, an illiterate mother reflected upon the effect of her involvement in the classroom. She evaluated that her children exhibited increased motivation thanks to community involvement in children's learning spaces:

> *Before I come in they are making such a racket that is too much, eh? And one of the little girls says, "Juan's mummy is here" and they sit down. [And I say] "Well come one everyone calm down and you'll see what happens [if not] eh! You'll see!" And all of the kids sit there to do what the teacher says and everything goes well, and the teacher is there with them [and the teacher said] "if I hadn't seen this with my own eyes I wouldn't have believed it" and she also said "when are you coming next?"*

INCLUD-ED also identified family education as being both a successful educational action and a form of educative community involvement. One key characteristic of family educational activities found in La Paz is that such activities respond to families' demands that have been explicitly expressed as a result of the school seeking to serve the families' needs. Some of the courses that were organized for families involve basic instrumental learning, such as language and literacy. Evidence of the positive impact of this action was collected. During the data collection process, the interviews and communicative discussion groups revealed that teachers and relatives agreed on two aspects of family education as particularly powerful for the education of the students. On the one hand, they perceived that education for adult family members influenced and improved student achievement. On the other hand, they believed that family education programs improved families' employment opportunities. Teachers and parents agreed that participating in family education activities promotes new interactions in households which are more in line with those at school and therefore children's learning and achievement. One teacher explained:

> *It is also beneficial to the children to see that their family is… something so close to them, as close to them as the school is and the way in which they [mothers] are also involved in school and they also go there to learn. Therefore, I think that it is very good, well, because it establishes more links between the family and pupils and also us. Some mothers who have participated in family education activities know the school better and have more tools for helping their children with their homework. Families thus become academic role models for their children. This challenges the stereotype about the Roma people as non-academic or not interested in education.*

A Roma relative from the school acknowledged the importance for the families to be engaged in their children's education:

> *The parents learn and then afterwards they can help their children, this also means that they [the children] are enriched and they are more motivated to continue studying.*

In dialogue with researchers during data collection, parents and other community members evaluated different kinds of family education activities. They were straightforward about pointing out the effectiveness of family education programs. They emphasized two key aspects of those programs: focusing on the instrumental dimension of learning, and addressing their needs to get into the labor market. La Paz school is a Learning Community that responds to community needs. It offers activities for family education focused on improving employability. An example is a course in training school canteen assistants that was requested by the community. By the end of the training, 85% of the women that had participated found jobs in the surrounding area (Sordé Martí, Munté, Prieto-Flores, & Contreras, 2012). One woman explained the importance of the school offering training for families that was useful in terms meeting their occupational needs:

> *We did the course for school canteen monitors. Therefore we had to work in school canteens and on the playgrounds. Through this training, two monitors in the canteens and six girls who did the summer school last year stayed on. And this had the effect that many more people were trained in that and this year we have had to take registration-list for the monitors of summer schools...and they have expressed that if they are trained with an official certificate (...) something that accredits their skills and abilities, more opportunities open up for them (...), this has improved a lot, some mothers that were trained with us have graduated now.*

Evaluative participation in education

The three types of family and community involvement in schools that influence student achievement include evaluative participation. This consists of the participation of family and community members in the evaluation of students' progress and/or the school functioning. In La Paz, the results of the evaluative participation are collected in the Dialogic School Report. It consists of an internal annual evaluation of the academic year that involves assessing the school's progress and making plans in a joint dialogic manner with the entire community. The community includes the various associations that are affiliated with the school. It also includes participants such as family members, volunteers, professionals from the educational administration, the school advisory team, community organizations, etc. The Dialogic School Report describes this evaluation as dialogic, because the evaluation results from the inclusion of the voices of teachers, family and community members in the assessment of the school progress in relationship to the dreams of the entire community. Those voices interact on an equal basis:

This report is an internal evaluation. It takes into account the reality that our programming was quite general and was based on the general principles of learning communities. This report was written dialogically by the Associations (Asociación Calí, Secretariado Gitano, Social Services) and people who participated in the project (family members, volunteers, external advisors from CEP [Teachers centre], Ctroadi [Territorial resource centre for guidance, diversity and interculturality] and the Education Delegation), both externally and internally. All of these conclusions were collected and captured in this report, which will be the starting point for the creation of the PGA [Annual General Programme] for the next school year [Dialogic Report] 2: 2006-2007)

The Dialogic School Report collects the contributions of the participants regarding their evaluative opinions of the school's progress. The school's General Annual Programme is planned on the basis of the agreed-upon assessments. This activity involves a third type of community involvement in education. The INCLUD-ED project was found to influence student learning and achievement, meaning it was a form of *decisive participation*. This participation implies that family and community members can make useful decisions about core aspects of school functioning that are directly related to learning opportunities offered in the school.

Evaluations are not the exclusive responsibility of the teachers and other professionals in the school. It is open to all stakeholders. Opening the evaluation process to community-wide participation allows that not only professionals' knowledge, opinions and interpretations are taking into account in the assessment of the school. These "expert" analyses are complemented by the knowledge, perspectives and opinions of parents and community members.

Evaluative participation allows the community to participate in decisions concerning whether or not to implement certain educational actions. For instance, one specific family education programme mentioned above −course for school canteen assistants− was a decision made in the evaluation process and recorded in the Dialogic School Report. This dialogic process led to the community evaluating the positive impact the training had in improving the quality of life among the participating women. It also enhanced the connection between the home and school contexts, which ultimately improved students' learning opportunities.

Another important achievement that resulted from evaluative participation was the inclusion of secondary education in the primary school building. As a rule students left the academic track after finishing primary school. This led to limited job market opportunities because they missed out on secondary education. Through evaluative participation actions, the families participated in the school and evaluated the barriers that students faced in trying to complete secondary education. In 2007, this participation led to the families proposing a creative solution to an old problem: requesting that La Paz school provide secondary education in the elementary school building. The administration, sharing the same families' concerns about improving the academic opportunities of the youths, accepted the community's proposal and worked on accomplishing that goal. This inclusive dialogue between the family and the school made the dream come true: In 2013, teachers, family and community members, and the administration celebrated the first cohort of students in La Milagrosa to complete compulsory secondary education.

The positive impact of these processes made it possible to coordinate and extend successful actions into the school and the neighborhood. For example, dialogic evaluation found that many extra-curricular activities overlapped. Consequently, measures were taken to coordinate the timetables of the activities, and this extended the learning time in the school and the neighborhood. Community participation in the evaluations in La Paz is closely tied to participation in learning activities: participating in educative actions made possible for the families to get to know the learning activities offered in the school well, and to become familiar with the school's functions. This, in turn, promoted greater community involvement in their evaluations of the school, as well as better-informed evaluative participation. In addition, collecting data about family and community involvement in education through the communicative methodology implied a climate of egalitarian dialogue among educational agents that was essential for identifying the elements that explain the success of the evaluative participation in La Paz.

In the school, any relative, regardless of academic and cultural background, can engage in student learning activities (such as Interactive Groups), family education, decision-making, and evaluations of the students and the school. The communicative methodology allows adults to reflect upon, question, and elaborate upon various types of community involvement in education that they may perceive as enhancing student learning and contributing to community development.

An analysis of the data collected for the INCLUD-ED Project revealed an important commonality between two types of evaluation. First, there is the one that takes place during data collection and analysis in research projects conducted using communicative methodology. Second, there is the type of family and community involvement in schools, defined as evaluative, that is successful. Both types of evaluation are *dialogic*. This means that they prioritize the inclusion of all voices in dialogue in order to advance knowledge of "what works" best in education (and what does not). The ultimate goal is to base educational actions on evidence of success (Puigvert, Christou & Holford, 2012).

Mertens (1999) has written: *can a report be balanced when the voices of important constituencies are missing or inaccurately represented, or lost in the aggregation of data across groups?* (p. 6). Research conducted using a communicative methodology has shown that community participation is crucial in educational actions that promote school success,

and that not all types of family and community involvement are equally influential in promoting student achievement (Díez, Gatt, & Racionero, 2011). Thus, when relatives and community members become involved in learning and evaluation activities, they increase children's chances for school success. Successful schools such as La Paz include family and community members in the evaluation and assessment of the progress produced by the actions they implement. This has contributed to the improvement of students' school success, and the overall social inclusivity of the community.

Opening the floor to reflections and proposals from all quarters, and taking them into account, has been a key feature of evaluative participation. It also involves data collection processes and analyses using a communicative methodology of research. This dialogic orientation has made it possible for families with little or no education at all, members of historically excluded groups such as the Roma, and those not previously invited to participate in school, to now decide upon the education of their children and the future of their community. La Paz has become a place for everyone, where the voices of the community are both heard and have become decisive for improving children's learning outcomes and the school (Flecha & Soler, 2013; Oliver, et al, 2011). The same lessons apply to research in social sciences and humanities that seeks to serve public good. Communicative Methodology of research is a methodological tool for advancing this dream.

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Evaluation as Social Construction

Peter Dahler-Larsen

Most observers of the present landscape of educational policy and practice recognize that evaluation is an incredibly influential phenomenon. The daily lives of teachers and students are to a large extent formed and shaped by testing, quality assurance, accreditation, auditing, benchmarking, inspection and related forms of evaluation. Appadurai (1996) suggests that we can analyze the contemporary world in terms of ethno-scapes, techno-scapes, idea-scapes etc. I suggest we add *data-scapes* to the list, because evaluative data seem to extend across time and space in ways that reconfigure the reality they claim to describe. We know from Latour (2005) that any inscription device that creates traces of what it seeks to represent, de facto also shapes and channels these representations trough a particular *form* that is not neutral. For example, international comparisons of educational achievements promote the assumption that all nations have the same educational goals (Meyer, 2008). To make an object evaluable in a particular way is a constitutive and performative act. Thus, the advancement of *evaluability* of educational policies and practices demands our attention. To build an evaluation is to lead it into particular forms of social construction.

In this chapter I will look at evaluation in education as social construction. This may help us understand both how evaluation is *constructed* (meaning all the ways in which it depends on an institutional, political and organizational context) and how evaluation helps, in a very active and interactive way, *construct* new definitions of what education means and how it should be practiced. These two aspects, the constructed and the constructing, can be kept analytically separate, but they should not be seen as disconnected.

There is good theoretical reason to think of these aspects of evaluation together. Our views so far have been too limited and fragmented. For example, in a comparative institutional perspective, we can "explain" causally why there are different evaluation practices in different contexts. Moreover, rational, mainstream textbook approaches often prescribe what is seen as the best technical evaluation model in a given evaluation "situation" in a way that reduces historical and political values to "contextual factors" that can be dealt with. Furthermore, there is no problematization of where evaluation comes from. Additionally, evaluation has ideally aimed at a form of utilization that is linear, direct and predictable. Yet, studies on the use of evaluation have demonstrated a so-called *process use* (Rebien, Forss & Carlsson, 2002) where people learn not from evaluation results, but from participation in evaluation. The contemporary literature increasingly focuses on the interactive and collaborative use of evaluation (Prewitt, Schwandt & Straf, 2012), as well as to its constitutive use (Dahler-Larsen, 2014a) in producing new realities in a way that is not linear and not easy to predict. To avoid an ontological dichotomy (evaluation is causally determined vs being in control) and an oscillation of responsibilities (the evaluator has responsibility for rational evaluation and nobody has responsibility for unpredictable consequences of evaluation), the social constructionist perspective is worth

pursuing. It is a difficult task, of course, since reflexivity and indeterminacy (Gergen, 2001) should be taken into account as well as larger structures of power and politics.

Taking social construction seriously has consequences for the very writing of a text like this. Latour (2005) reminds us that we cannot begin with assuming well-known phenomena like "individuals", "things", "interests", and "levels of analysis" etc. Everything upon which we can build an analysis in fact turns out to be constructively entangled in associations and connections that cut across "analytical levels", across distinctions between human beings and things, between individuals and social relations, and between evaluation and the reality it deals with. Another difficulty is that socially constructed phenomena are taken-for-granted (Berger and Luckmann, 1967). Analyzing social construction means questioning the taken-for-granted, but a text that does that often appears opaque, speculative or otherwise "far out." We cannot question all constructions at the same time, because we use constructions to make our critique of other constructions meaningful.

What I have chosen to do in the following is to first describe what I think social construction means. Then I will present three examples of how I think evaluation operates constructively. My examples are all drawn from personal experiences in the field of education. They grow in complexity. After that, I offer a list of theoretical ideas and concepts that I consider useful for understanding evaluation as a social construction. Thereby I hope to let social constructionism work rather than just talk about it in the abstract. I conclude the text with a discussion of how one can be critical of evaluation practices that are seen as social constructions.

The Meaning of Social Construction in the Present Context

We do live in a world in which it has become possible to say that quite a few things are socially constructed. To say so is in itself no longer ground-breaking. The question is what does it mean? (Hacking, 1999). Since my interest here is in evaluation as socially constructed rather that in social construction as such, I shall only register briefly the general theoretical discussion of constructionism (Holstein & Gubrium, 2007; Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Castoriadis, 1997; McNamee, 2004; Gergen & Gergen, 2003), leave the constructivism/constructionism debate (McNamee, 2004; Holstein & Gubrium, 2007) aside and emphasize what I believe are the three key elements of social construction: *language*, *interaction*, and the *imaginary*. Language is not only descriptive, but has performative and constitutive capacities, too. Language for me also includes signs and symbols related to quantification.

Social construction is inherently a social, interactive and relational phenomenon (Gergen, 1998). Socially constructed phenomena are not just created through thinking, but through social enactment (Weick, 1977). Finally, the imaginary refers to the social capacity to construct or create, if you will, phenomena such as *Bildung*, performance, competition, goals, sin, democratic deficit, community and so on, the social meaning and

significance of which may have no determinant or physical referent at all (Castoriadis, 1997). The measurement of such phenomena requires some element of imagination.

We should not subscribe to the popular but misconceived idea that social construction implies that some individuals can just think of some ideas and then these phenomena exist (a simplified version of individualism, voluntarism, and nominalism). It is not the key point of social constructionism to deny the existence of a physical world. I will leave the questions of ontology and existence as such to the philosophers. It is interesting to note that our physical world appears to be an increasingly socially constructed physical world. (Think of infrastructures and the climate). For example, in 2006, astronomers met in Prague and, by vote, reduced the number of planets. Pluto was found not to fall within the new official definition. In other words, whether Pluto is a planet is entirely a social question. The same with the name "Pluto". Whether there "really" exists in a philosophical sense an actual phenomenon to which the name Pluto is attached, remains a philosophical question about which I have nothing to say.

Social constructionists pay attention to that which is socially meaningful and what is meaningful may have little or no physical referent. Thus, exposing socially significant phenomena to the "but-do-they-really-exist-in-a-physical-sense-argument" is just irrelevant. "Things" can exist that are not physical, but the thing-ness metaphor (Säljö, 2002) just confuses the argument because it precisely repeats the ontology we need to transgress! In other words, this problem is one we have created for ourselves in the modern Western world by assuming that for something to exist, it must be a thing.

The reason why the presumably anti-constructionist argument (i.e. construction equals non-existence, because existence must be physical) should be confronted directly is that it represents deep assumptions of the modern, Western, rational mind. Thus the question that I find myself having to answer is: Where do you stand, as a constructionist, on the individualism vs collectivism, voluntarism vs determinism, and nominalism vs essentialism distinctions? My answer is that I cannot place myself along such old-school dichotomies, because they represent the same kind of thinking that we must question. (All the interesting sociologists, Luhmann, Latour, Bourdieu, and others, try to transgress these dichotomies).

By implication, social constructionism, as I see it, does not provide any simple answers about the questions of human freedom in creating a desired social order. It is a classical tenet in social constructionist thinking that although anything social appears to be solid, objectified, stable and physical in its apparent thing-ness (an idea reflected in Durkheim's notion that we should in fact study the social as thing!), social order is primarily a product of human interaction, language, and imagination. The debunking and social critique of existing orders that results from social constructionist analysis is often too easy because it is always right and always smarter than the social actors involved (Latour, 2005). The actors are often still faced with a social reality in which they are entangled. Claiming that a phenomenon is constructed does not make it disappear. Instead it points to the interactive, contingent and institutionalized aspects of our life as social beings.

This reality, or "context" if you will, often remains as real as it ever was, even if it merely consists of frozen, institutionalized and stabilized interactions, languages, and

imaginations. It was never the purpose of social constructionist analyses to say that reality was not real, nor that it was easy to change.

There is a great paradox: A conscious analytical social constructionist analysis does not in itself put actors in position to deliberately change the social world, since it was never an assumption in social constructionist theory that the world was a result of rational, planned, and deliberate action. A social constructionist analysis may, at best, change the perspective on existing constructions so they appear more clearly as constructions and perhaps become softened or destabilized. It happens every now and then that constructions that otherwise look stable suddenly fall apart, perhaps because they are no longer supported by the interaction, language and imagination they need (e.g. the fall of the Berlin Wall).

Social constructions may in fact be harder or softer than they appear. They may change for many reasons. One of the ways in which constructionists may seek to encourage change is through social experimentation, beginning with patterns of action that are unexpected and invite unconventional responses (Watzlawick, 1984). But the point is that neither planning, calculation nor manipulation puts one in position to predict which social constructions will hold and which will fall. An interdependent and contingent world perhaps neither enhances nor reduces human freedom: it simply makes the issue of freedom more complicated because freedom is dispersed in time and place and cuts across conventional distinctions (including the individual/collective distinction).

Hacking (1999) recommends that constructionists should be clearer about whether they seek to unmask or refute existing social constructions, and what the moral and political implications are. As I see it, there are no easy implications. Social constructionism helps point to the element of taken-for-granted-ness and apparent physical "thing-ness" in our assumptions. But it is only we who are responsible for the implications when "solid reality" is contested and "weakened." Social constructionist arguments invite moral and political deliberation, but they do not champion one particular ideal over another (Gergen, 2009: 231). We are alone with our practice, situated on "rough ground" (Schwandt, 2003).

Evaluation as Social Construction

If our curiosity dares to face this uncharted territory, we can achieve a fresh perspective on evaluation as a constructed/constructing phenomenon. Let´s consider three simple examples of how evaluation helps a particular pedagogical practice emerge. The examples may appear micro-social when you read them at first, but I will gradually place them into their wider social context.

Example 1

When I was hired at the University of Copenhagen, one of my first tasks was to help teach a PhD course in qualitative methods. This was a challenge. PhD students can be very sharp. The course was intended for students who appreciated and needed qualitative methods, as well as students who worked only with quantitative methods. The institutional motivation was to let these two groups of students understand each other´s perspectives.

Since paradigm issues are sensitive, I believed I would be evaluated based on how well I engaged in a friendly dialogue with all students.

I therefore decided to spend quite a lot of time to answer all questions carefully, no matter from what perspective they came. I did not foresee that students foreign to qualitative methods turned out to have many more questions than everybody else. They continued to ask during the whole week. For this reason I spent time explaining and defending very basic ideas and assumptions instead of moving ahead with the themes of interest to those students already committed to qualitative methods. The course evaluation in general turned out to be positive, although I personally felt that I did not progress enough into the material needed by the more advanced enthusiasts of qualitative methods. The evaluation criterion that I had imagined ended up influencing my practice, perhaps too much. My evaluation criterion helped shape my practice. Especially under uncertainty and ambiguity (how will they evaluate me at this new place?), an evaluation criterion may blaze the trail for implementation of a particular practice, even if the criterion is primarily imaginary.

Example 2

In 2007, a new grading scale was introduced in Denmark. One of the first official reasons for doing so was that foreign education institutions seemed unable to understand how Danish students were graded. The existing scale was not only complex, but also included a top grade that was so demanding that it was very rarely granted. It expressed a high academic ideal that students could strive for, but few would reach it. Another concern was to introduce a more objectives-based and performance-oriented philosophy. In all courses, clear objectives would be formulated, and grades on the new scale would be given according to the degree of accomplishment of these objectives. As a consequence, a student who achieved all goals would receive the top grade.

A primary task for the university teacher who complied with the official philosophy of the new bureaucratico-pedogogical approach was to make sure that objectives were clear and that all pedagogical methods and components of teaching were directed towards these objectives. As a consequence, no spontaneous activity was expected to take place during the course unless legitimized with reference to already-explicated plans and objectives. That is to me the dark side of a particular paradigm for teaching and learning, one that is becoming increasingly dominant. Notice how closely this paradigm is connected to the notion of evaluability (embodied in the new grading scale).

In Denmark, university teachers today find students to be very pragmatic and instrumental in their approach to academic studies. Very few students search for new insights that fundamentally challenge the views of their teachers. Very few students see their study in social science as part of a larger project of social change. In fact, they have adapted all too well to the goal-directed philosophy. Paradoxically, as higher education is becoming merely a means to an end, students will invest in it just the necessary effort and not more than that.

As Foucault (1980) has warned, human mentalities can be constituted by surveillance and normalization systems. While it may be difficult to demonstrate an exact

causal link between the new grading system and the mentality I just described, it is also difficult to ignore their close affinity.

As a teacher, I feel some of the most precious aspects of learning processes are lost if learning becomes doing just enough to live up to the standards that are already set. To me, learning is expanding horizons and questioning pre-set standards. To the extent that university learning is a mirror of research and for some, indeed a socialization into research, I fear that research is also being modeled as an activity that does just what is enough to get its productivity measured. There is less focus on curiosity and searching new insights. Evaluability seems to be a nodal point in discourses that reshape the practices of both learning and research. In this case, the fact that a grading scale is very visible, general, and institutionalized makes it impossible to avoid. Therefore it is likely to produce reactions and consequences. The institutionalization of the evaluation machinery is conducive to its socially constructive properties.

Example 3[1]

The Danish minister of education, Sofie Carsten Nielsen, has talked about the need to reform higher education because, as she says, "Danish students are the slowest students in the world." The radio program "Detektor" that looks critically at how data are used by authorities in the media, asked the ministry to deliver data to support this statement. The Ministry returned a short note with excerpts from *Education at a Glance* (OECD, 2013). As a professor in evaluation, I was asked to analyse the data and explain whether data provided valid justification for the minister´s statement. During a lengthy interview (not on air), I explained three things. First, the minister used data about age at graduation to make conclusions about length of study, thereby confusing the two (OECD claims to describe the former only, not the latter). Secondly, the minister focused on age of graduation with a B.A. rather than a M.A. degree, although most professions in Denmark require a M.A. degree. I therefore found the latter more relevant, but on that indicator Danish youths scored fine, better than the OECD average. Finally, I asked why students need to complete their studies so quickly? The answer was that according to OECD, the only way we could know the economic value of employees is through their productivity (for which salary is used as a proxy variable in the case of public employees). In the OECD area in *toto*, there is a strong economic effect of completing an education because of the wage differential between people with higher education and those without it. However, in the egalitarian Danish society there is only a small wage differential. In other words, an economic calculation that is valid in OECD in general but is less valid in Denmark is tacitly undergirding the justification to speed up higher education programs.

In the final Detektor program broadcasted by the Danish National Radio (March 6, 2014), two succinct passages relating to my two first points were included. The minister replied that she was sorry she had overstated her point. She promised to be more careful with data in the future, although she said the need for reform is still pressing.

[1] Adopted from Dahler-Larsen (2014b).

The epistemic skeleton of the data-scape that undergirds the minister´s reasoning is provided by OECD as an economic institution. Furthermore, "Education at a Glance" assumes a degree of institutional autonomy (from national democratic governments and from OECD itself!) by stating that "this work is published on the responsibility of the Secretary-General of the OECD. The opinions expressed and arguments employed herein do not necessarily reflect the official views of the Organisation or of the governments of its member countries." One of the reasons why "Education at a Glance" travels through time and space is that it easily makes news. Complex issues of international competition are simplified through quantification and ranking. It appeals to an imagery that is apparently attractive for media – like sports (competition, speed, ranking, winning).

OECD provided a paradigm for understanding education that the newly appointed minister endorsed, even though the "facts" produced by this paradigm and reported by the Minister had to be withdrawn because they were made up or reported carelessly. The correction and the subsequent apology also became news. While the Minister was firm in pursuing her reforms, she promised to be more careful with data in the future – perhaps more disciplined vis-à-vis the data she can only use, but not control. It remains to be asked why my third and more controversial point about wage differentials and the (withering) justification for speeding up higher education was not cited in the radio program. Perhaps it was too lengthy and difficult to explain. Perhaps it ran counter to accepted economic ideology. Perhaps the radio program was victim of its own pre-cooked narrative dramaturgy: See how we catch the Minister in making a mistake.

Reflecting on the story, I am sure that the media, "Education at a Glance", the Minister, and myself interacted for a short while, but I am not sure who was being *used* by whom. At the end of the day, however, certain statements were withdrawn, and "bad" facts were distinguished from "good" facts, to which the Minister promised to be loyal. A fundamental problematic assumption, however, was never questioned. While a few data collapsed, the paradigm remained. Policies are now being implemented that aim directly at making students complete their M.A. programs faster and at younger age. In all three cases, elements of language, interaction, and imagination play together to produce a reality out of something evaluated. For such socially constructed phenomena I propose the term *constitutive effects of evaluation*.

The Constitutive Effects of Evaluation

It is well known in the theory of quantification that any measurement presupposes or helps constitute a set of fundamental distinctions and categories (Porter, 1994; Espeland & Stevens, 2008). More specifically, I propose that we can look for constitutive effects of evaluation in four specific domains, in short called "content", "time", "relations", and "world view."

In terms of *content*, a particular question-and-answer oriented pedagogy was enhanced in the first example because I as a teacher had an evaluation criterion in mind that cast a shadow over my entire approach to the course. As a consequence, I covered basic discussions and controversies over assumptions more advanced material less intensely that I would otherwise have done. In example two, the very content of teaching is

influenced through the definition of the teaching enterprise as a goal-oriented activity that the new grading system helps establish. Surprises, mysteries, and questions that are interesting because they are stimulated by spontaneous curiosity are squeezed out because they cannot, by definition, be planned and justified with objectives as legitimate. In example three, the content of higher education seems not to be the issue, which is remarkable in itself, but assumptions are tacitly made that Denmark has the same educational goals as other countries and what matters is only the issue of how quickly students graduate. This brings us to the issue of time.

Time plays a role in all three examples. In the first one, questions from a particular type of students slows down progress vis-à-vis other issues in the PhD course. Because of the fixed time-frame (one week) a focus on one type of question in practice leaves less time to other issues and concerns. This is also one of classical ways in which evaluation criteria helps shape reality. Under conditions of limited time and attention (Lindblom, 1959), an evaluation criterion representing one set of values may squeeze out another set of values, not through any overt conflict or debate, but simply by insisting that this criterion be placed on the collective imaginary radar screen. Then there is simply less social space for other views. Neither evaluators nor advocates of the dominant view need to admit that there is any value issue or conflict in what they do. It is up to someone else to handle conflicts in practice between values that are represented by evaluation criteria and values that are not.

In example two, the issue of time is somewhat implicit, but cannot be ignored in a world where education is equated with goal-accomplishment. If a set of goals can be achieved more easily or quickly in some situations rather than others, then students and teachers are likely to focus on avoiding such barriers. Under newly introduced rules in my institution, every teacher must now specify how many hours of work per course each student can expect to allocate to various learning tasks. All courses are allocated the same time budget. In this way, it is hoped that students will not be expected to pass exams without serious effort. At the same time, however, I also think that a meta-message is conveyed to students: You shall count hours and minutes. Time spent on learning that does not lead to goal accomplishment is wasted. Time is itself a structuring principle.

The issue of time is particularly pertinent in example three, where time spent on studies is the central political issue. Again, the overarching message is that education is not a source of nourishment in itself; it is a means to an end, and should therefore be accomplished as quickly as possible. In general, when rough and uneven realities must be described and measured in a data-scape that privileges comparability, money and time are often used as the most general functional currencies on the basis of which comparisons are made (Munro, 2004).

In all three examples the consequences of evaluation are embedded in and constitutive of particular sets of *social relations*. In the first example, the imagined evaluation in the teacher´s mind made him initially attentive to all groups of students, but since one group asked more time-consuming questions than the other, he partly sacrificed his relation with the other group. Concerning the relations between the groups, perhaps the group that never accepted the basic assumptions of the course thereby demonstrated that they remained free from acceptance of basic paradigmatic ideas related to qualitative

methods. In example two, it is part of the role of the teacher to clarify goals, to plan pedagogical methods and to justify how means and ends are connected. It also becomes the role of the teacher to explain what the students should do to accomplish the objectives. A teacher who takes students into uncharted terrains is making a mistake. Pedagogical mentalities enhance particular pedagogical roles and identities. This is also true in example three. A set of economic accountability relations are established around education.

In all cases, a particular world-view, i.e. a broad understanding of what education is and how it fits into a larger structure of meaning, is enhanced in a way that bears the traces of the form of evaluation at play. In the first example, it is the idea that everybody has a right to ask questions, which is apparently important from a student satisfaction perspective. In the second and third examples, it is the idea that education is fundamentally defined as efficiency and goal-accomplishment in a world dominated by economic performance and competition.

Contexts and Mechanisms in Constitutive Effects

The examples above suggest that there is something we can call contexts and mechanisms at play that are not the same everywhere and which help facilitate the social construction of reality out of evaluation. Among the mechanisms that facilitate the transformation of evaluation criteria into social practice is the desire for acceptance, recognition and approval (illustrated by the teacher´s desire to be accepted in a new work place in the micro-political context of example 1.) In all examples, it is also the case that very few themes occupy the human mind at any given time in any given context. As constructionists, we can agree with the cognitive psychologists that only a limited amount of attention is possible in any given situation. Once an evaluative theme or an evaluative criterion occupies the mental radar screen, the way in which the world is looked upon is defined in that situation. As a corollary, it is also significant that a theme or question is kept away from that radar screen (example 3).

However, as Morgan (2006) argues, some of our cognitive limitations are properties of bureaucratic organisations and institutions rather than universal human characteristics. Some forms of evaluation are made part of organizational procedures in a routinized and institutionalized way. Such procedures contribute to making evaluation official, regulated and predictable. Organizational procedures define the way organizations look at reality. They channel attention. They also connect with other procedures in a larger set of organizational practices. In example one, there is a somewhat personal and micro-social link between evaluation concerns and pedagogical practice, although of course, the teacher experience with organized evaluation has an objective basis as all such courses are evaluated by the official university machinery. In example two, the organizational element is systematic, as it is officially and bureaucratically required that teachers explicate objectives that can be used in assessment of student performances. In example three, OECDs statistical machinery helps define educational themes, categories, and rankings at a trans-national and national scale as a starting point for national policy-making.

Comparison and quantification produce simple pictures of otherwise rough or unequal phenomena, reducing everything to the same regime of commensuration. In addition, comparison helps define not only what is measured, but also who is competing. Foucault would agree here that modern technologies of comparing, for example countries, as well as individuals (case two) not only enhances normalization and discipline, but also helps define the very entities under comparison. In doing so, evaluation is at the same time constitutive of "fitting" individuals, organizations and other entities into a world-view or framework that highlights particular problems and solutions and conceals others. Moreover, problem definitions begin to drive policy (Schneider & Ingram, 2008: 203). Evaluation helps produce political ontologies by establishing the fundamental categories upon which political understandings and actions are defined (Hay, 2006).

In fact, once a certain educational problem is framed as an issue of competition between, say, countries or individuals, and pressure is put upon such entities to act rationally to "solve" the stipulated problems (Meyer, Boli & Thomas, 1994), it may be difficult to conceive of alternative ways at looking at the situation. The result may be a "society under siege", where it is difficult to conceive of alternative collective solutions because individuals (or other entities) are set against each other within the same regime of evaluability and accountability. This may be true whether we look at entities in symmetrical roles (competitors) or complementary roles (such as evaluator and evaluated). In both situations, evaluations help maintain a particular configuration of social roles and relations. Indicators, like money, regulate social relations.

If you occupy a role that is under evaluation, any attempt to "break out" is likely to produce a bad evaluation score as a starting point. This is what happened at a meeting where an international scholar discussed new bibliometric measures with colleagues in Scandinavia. A member of the audience raised a very critical view about these new quantitative approaches to evaluation of research. The speaker answered that he believed that good academic achievements in general are correlated with good reference (?) scores. By implication, good academics would have good scores and thus no reason to complain. In other words, it was implied that critics of the evaluation system were not good academics. In an elegant rhetorical move, the evaluation system was legitimized and its critics attacked *ad hominem*.

One of the important functions of an evaluation regime may be to help create a particular institutional "lock-in" (Osterloh & Frey, 2014) where it becomes difficult to be critical. If deviants are low scorers, and if you may win a good score, there is no reason to question the social order because you have too much to lose. Ranking of educational institutions can create a similar lock-in, if students, applicants, alumni, board members and others put pressure on educational managers to take ranking extremely seriously (Sauder & Espeland, 2009).

In modernity, we tend to ascribe what is measured to the agents or entities under measurement as if they "own" the scores (Sampson, 2003: 125) and as if they can be held responsible for their scores. By socially creating a tight link between an entity and its score we create a reality in which it is possible to know how to deal with an individual in the future, based on past test scores (Hanson, 2000: 70). Tests help define drug addicts, under-achievers, liars, and extremely intelligent people. In this sense, an evaluative regime helps

produce the reality it claims to measure (Hanson, 2000). The tightness between an agent and his/her score (as if your score essentially defines you) is key to understanding why there is much anxiety about scores, performance data, evaluation and the like, and why steering individuals and organizations by means of evaluation is a mechanism that often works in a modern social order that emphasizes rationality and self-control (Meyer, Boli & Thomas, 1994).

It is a fundamental property of variables that they can vary. Social contingency leads to personal anxiety when people see themselves being held responsible not only for scores, but also for potential varying scores in the future. One of the ways in which evaluation regimes may stabilize themselves is thus through the placement of responsibility for future scores upon the scoring individuals. Imagination and anxiety may go hand in hand to help make this mechanism operational.

In an empirical study of upper secondary school teachers in Denmark I found that teachers spent quite a lot of mental energy thinking about future evaluation scores and potential future implications (Dahler-Larsen & Pihl-Thingvad, 2014). Teachers were subject to three evaluative indicators: average grades, drop-out-rates, and student satisfaction scores, each of which potentially influences next year´s attrition of students. Teachers were worried about how little these scores (especially student satisfaction) said about what they felt was genuine quality at the school. They were also worried about the fact that the three scores were contradicting each other. For example, academic standards may be at odds with student satisfaction.

In the interviews, we talked about what teachers would do if the student satisfaction score went up the following year. Several teachers said that they would definitely use that score in marketing their school, since the number of teachers hired or fired each year depends directly on student enrolment. In other words, they could imagine the beneficial use of an indicator that they otherwise felt was not valid. They imagined themselves entering a new terrain that was, at best, very ambiguous according to their own professional standards. What I theoretically find interesting here is the controversial link between potential variability of the indicator score, the imagination of one´s own future, and one´s self-management as a professional (Dahler-Larsen & Pihl-Thingvad, 2014). I see professional anxiety as a result of being pushed into a strategic landscape in which there is strong motivation to benefit from a score on an indicator that is otherwise professionally problematic.

My theoretical point is that a particular score is a powerful ingredient in the social construction of a practice, but we need to bring the *imagination of future scores* for which individuals and organizations can be held accountable into our analysis of the socially constructive aspects of evaluation, too. This mechanism helps us explain how evaluative criteria can create new social orders out of very little existing material.

One of the socially productive aspects of this phenomenon is that the individual or organization under evaluation are motivated to take responsibility for the contingencies that influence the future score. For example, if my supervision of graduate students is evaluated on the basis of whether my students complete their theses on time, I am motivated to select students who have already proved to be efficient. In cases where a student suffers from a writer’s block I am inclined to inquire into the underlying

psychological problems even if I do not have the psychological training to do so. I am forced to at least consider whether I should engage in factors that impinge on evaluation of "my" performance.

Anxiety about evaluation results may be further enhanced as they are made collectively available or public through media. Publication may add pressure on somebody to act. Evaluation results that are quantitative and comparative may qualify as good news because they help compress a larger complexity into one message that conforms with the definition adopted by the media. Publication of evaluations may help amplify their effects because it condenses messages and increases the pressure to act. This may be even more so if evaluation results are consistent with what Meyer and Rowan (1977) and others call "rationalized myths", i.e. broad beliefs in the modern world, such as "learning", "development", "effectiveness" and "international economic competition".

If it is true that the social construction of effects of evaluation depends on support by larger rationalized myths in society, then we should be able to demonstrate how evaluation practices change if there is a change in the larger social imaginary. This is what I try to do in my book "The Evaluation Society" (Dahler-Larsen, 2012). I suggest that reflexive modernization, guided by the ideal of development, encourages evaluative reflection by making contingencies, complexities and side effects visible. Subsequently, especially after 2001, I suggest there has been an increasing focus on audit, not guided by the ideal of development, but that of assurance. Evaluation practices in the audit society are more defensive (focus on risk avoidance), more mandatory, and lead to more organizational and bureaucratic machinery. Evaluation practices may well operate on the micro-political level, but they are also embedded within large socio-historical patterns and imaginaries.

Although it is meaningful to analyse the constitutive effects of evaluation in the light of such "mechanisms" and "contexts" exemplified above, there is not going to be any definitive lists of these phenomena and when they succeed. Instead, it is more productive to think of "mechanisms" and "contexts" as socially constituted processes that vary across time and place. We may study them when they unfold, but they have no independent life apart from living social configurations of language, interaction and imagination. For that reason, I think that while it is important to pay attention to how evaluation leads to constitutive effects, it is not equivalent to producing causal explanations about the "factors" "behind" the effects.

What we can do, however, is to pay attention to how evaluation is said to lead to development, learning and change (under reflexive modernization) and to assurance (in the audit society). Rather than just subscribing to such grand rationalized myths, we might want to unpack what "development" or "assurance" does to particular practices under particular circumstances.

It is fruitful to look at the associations between all the phenomena in a given situation that help make a particular form of evaluation possible and hold its "use" in place. In science and technology studies (STS) (Latour, 2005), such a phenomenon is called a "hinterland". A hinterland is the configuration of everything that needs to be held in place for a measurement to unfold and to have some social consequence.

Evaluation and the Contestability Differential

If there were more doubt and critique and questioning about a specific evaluation than about what it seeks to evaluate, it would be like a person who turns around in the air when he or she turns a screwdriver. For the screw to be turned, the person must be more firmly connected to the rest of the world than the screw. That is why an evaluation needs to be tightly anchored in a hinterland of relatively solid social constructions. "Relative" is enough, because the evaluation just needs to be more solid than what is evaluated.

Evaluation is, indeed, a very special type of social construction, because it is a construction that seeks to impose social contingency upon other constructions. Evaluation is a part of a world with reflexive capacity; it is a second-order construction that deals with other constructions. Evaluation is a particular kind of social construction that ties several constructions to each other. An evaluation questions whether an evaluand is good, effective, valuable, improvable etc. But the evaluation itself is not a result of God-made norms or values; evaluation is man-made; it is assisted sense-making (Mark, Henry & Julnes, 2000) in which human beings construct a measurement of something for specific purposes in a specific situation. Evaluation is a construction that depends on a hinterland. An evaluator who is critically aware of the social construction of evaluation cannot buy into any hinterland as a starting point for evaluation in an unreflected way. There must be a way to analyse and reflect upon which constructions are taken for granted and which are not.

This raises the interesting sociological question as to when and how an evaluation under particular circumstances is able to achieve its purpose of casting doubt and contingency upon another social construction. This can only be achieved if a *contestability differential* between the evaluand and the evaluation can be established. In other words, there must be something questionable or contingent or not-taken-for granted about the evaluant that can be pointed to and the evaluation must be, at least for some time, be relatively authoritative, and seem trustworthy, valid or reliable, or institutionally strong or even unavoidable. I am not assuming that social construction is frictionless, quite the opposite. I am merely suggesting that the evaluation as a construction must be stronger (or less contested) than the evaluant it seeks to construct. Thus, an evaluation requires a contestability *dtfferential* to perform its evaluative function. The hinterland must be sufficiently strong to make the evaluant "soft" or sufficiently contingent, at least for the duration of the evaluation.

Evaluators and evaluative institutions have many tools available to help establish such contestability differential. They have expertise, methodological skills, and they build what is called "evaluation capacity" (Cousins, 2003). Institutions enrol manpower, and sometimes it is the sheer magnitude of the institution that makes some professionals comply (Dahler-Larsen, 2004). Institutions require that people write and read thick reports. Out of sheer of boredom, ordinary readers of complicated evaluation reports give up before understanding the machinery of complicated measurement. Recall example three where the journalists had no capacity or time to explain the deeper problems with the use of the OECD data beyond simple misrepresentation.

Another example of how evaluation becomes more solid is furnished by evaluation agencies that seek close relations with top managers (Loud & Mayne, 2013). Furthermore, evaluation agencies connect with broader values and rationalized myths such as development, progress, effectiveness, etc. Sometimes, evaluating agencies also throw doubt on evaluants by talking about "quality problems", "lack of willingness to change" etc. The contestability differential can be established by strengthening evaluation or by weakening the evaluant, or very often both.

If we recognize this double nature of social constructions involved in evaluation, we cannot a priori say whether evaluation is good or bad. If we dislike educational evaluation, do we also dislike evaluation of the war in Iraq? A too general view is ideological. It is no easy venture to establish normative solidarity with any particular evaluant, or any particular form of evaluation, and then stop asking questions. The social constructionist perspective does not intend to do that, rather the opposite. The constructed nature of the hinterland for the evaluation should not be concealed. In practice, however, not all assumptions can be questioned.

A further complication in critique is the fact that many large-scale organizations installing evaluation systems are also installing evaluations to correct evaluation systems. For example, in Denmark, a new form of inspection of foster homes is developed. The inspection is calibrated through professional audits among inspectors. Statistical samples are drawn from a monitoring system that checks inspection reports to see if inspection operates as intended. An overall meta-evaluation is also planned. Experts reflect upon the whole process in a steering group. When evaluation processes are overlapping in this way, no contestability differential in one evaluative procedure lives very long until another layer of observation and perspective is added, and then another one. An organization with enough resources can make it difficult for a critic to find a viewpoint that is not already being built into the next level of meta-evaluation. The official system cleverly takes up those parts of the critique that it is able to digest, and the classical distinction between "system" and "critique" becomes difficult to maintain.

In a world full of evaluation perspectives, any potential empty space that could otherwise be used for slow contemplation and sceptical afterthought may be filled with data by those who have the resources to do so. Speed, manpower and expertise are important here. The next set of data is already on its way. As a corollary, institutions that have the capacity to regulate or influence streams of evaluation hold an important source of power. They do not just produce evaluations that they like. In a fairly unpredictable world, where no evaluation is uncontroversial, they also already produce as quickly as they can the evaluations that set the agenda for the discussion of existing evaluation systems.

Evaluation and Social Critique

It is tempting to be critical towards evaluation. In order to take critique seriously, however, it is necessary to be explicit and reflective about the position from which critique is articulated. Would we wish to go back to a time in which evaluation did not exist? Would we believe that life would be happier, more straightforward, spontaneous and intuitive without reflection? If that is our position, we risk promoting a romantic notion of

a life based on mythology rather than the fragile, fragmented, uncertain, and reflexive character of life under modernity. We would also risk living under more totalitarian conditions, because mythical knowledge is easier to control and monopolize than modern fragmented and reflexive knowledge (Elias, 1987: 236). How far should we go back? Would we want to forbid political adversaries to publish their data? Should diaries also be banned because they encourage reflection? Should mirrors be broken?

Critique also becomes too easy if it simply points to the "socially constructed" nature of data, meaning "fabricated", "ideological" and "not trustworthy." Do we really think that evaluation data about the consequences of smoking on cancer is only a "social construction" that is "ideological"? (Latour, 2004). If we abandon measurement and evaluation because it can never be trusted, we also deprive the poor and underprivileged from demonstrating that their living conditions are bad in some objectively measurable sense (Latour, 2005). We must remind ourselves that "constructed" does not mean "fictitious". This kind of critique also ignores how new constructions flow out of so-called "fabricated" evaluation.

Do we think that the problem is that evaluation has *unintended* consequences? To me that would imply an old-fashioned idea that original and authentic intentions behind evaluation could be identified. Even if they could, which is highly problematic theoretically and empirically (Dahler-Larsen, 2014a), I would argue that as a part of socially constructive processes, new intentions could be developed on an ongoing basis. It could also be argued that evaluation works in favour of certain value positions and against others, which definitely deserves to be expressed explicitly. However, it is not an easy task to define a set of values that could serve as an ultimate and unquestionable basis for evaluation. This is so much more the case if we acknowledge that the consequences of evaluation may be unpredictable and complex, since they are a result of complex social interactions. As a consequence, it becomes difficult to claim that evaluation should only produce consequences that are planned and agreed-upon. As a social constructionist, you cannot curse everything that is unintended.

Progressive evaluators have responded to concerns over conventional forms of evaluation and conventional forms of use, by developing alternative evaluation models that are consistent with varieties of social critique, such as responsive evaluation (Stake, 2004), participatory evaluation (Greene, 1997), transformative evaluation and deliberative evaluation (House & Howe, 2000). I have much sympathy with the attempts to entangle evaluation from taken-for-granted values embedded in instrumental/managerial and elitist social frameworks. However, if we take the contestability differential described above seriously, it is no easy task to identify the alternative values which should inform evaluation (Schwandt, 2002). One potential answer comes from "culturally responsive evaluation" (Hopson, 2009) that seeks to identify with cultural values of underprivileged socio-economic and ethnic groups. Yet, our society is culturally fragmented and diverse, and for collective solutions to be found, there needs to be a way in which diverse cultural positions can engage in a social dialogue that is taken seriously by more than one part. There needs to be a justification for why one cultural group should attend to the values of another insofar as they live in the same society.

Deliberative democratic evaluation seeks to establish fundamental principles for a legitimate democratic dialogue. Yet again, the deliberative principles can also be contested, practically and philosophically. How do we know, without attending to the specificities of the social context in focus, that these procedures are appropriate (Schwandt, 2002) and how do we avoid situations in which one partner in a dialogue refuses to take statements form another seriously just because they are seen as inconsistent with the rules as he/she defines them? This is Vattimo´s (2004) critique of Habermas. Not all dialogue can begin with a common consensus about dialogical rules. We are often thrown into dialogues as we are thrown into our life in general without first having a chance to specify rules and principles.

The philosophical controversy over rules for dialogues in deliberative evaluation has practical consequences. Would we accept, for instance, sentences beginning with "I wonder if we can all agree that…" and "I feel that it would be unjust if…" but we cannot accept a statement beginning with "I have done a survey that shows the following to be true…". Perhaps counter to the intentions of deliberative democratic evaluation, it seems to operate on the basis of an a priori list of acceptable forms of democratic participation. Even if it may be easy to exclude violent forms of political activity, do we really mean that only a particular form of rational discourse counts? Are wearing fancy T-shirts, dancing in the street, holdings hands with immigrants, lightning a candle, doing observations, and making surveys not sometimes also forms of political practice?

If we accept the idea that evaluations are also social constructions, we are faced with the consequence that evaluation results we like may be as difficult to defend and have as shaky foundations as all other evaluations. The very idea of social construction implies that we can see social life both from a lived-experience perspective and from an analytical perspective, and that would have been impossible if there had only been one mythological/traditional way of living. Social constructionism itself is indicative of a certain socio-historical departure from myth. It signifies a new look at myth that, like eggs in an omelette, is not easy to unscramble (Vattimo, 2004). Thus, we cannot revert to myth in justification of an alternative kind of evaluation that we like better. In a certain sense, the invention of social constructionism puts a responsibility upon us from which we cannot escape. Social constructionism must take anti-foundationalism seriously. What if there is no single underlying principle, no identity, no rule, that guarantees when and how unquestionable evaluation should be made?

Evaluation, Scepticism and Weak Thinking

Evaluation deserves to be met with scepticism. If we take the contestability differential seriously, we should not conclude that evaluation per se is producing progress, development, change, and a better world. The hinterlands that make second-order constructions possible are human constructions that we have the right to question. On the other hand, it would be silly to generally criticize second-order constructions like theory, science, art and evaluation since they are part of a reflexive life that we cannot and do not wish to live without.

Instead, a constructionist perspective would suggest that a careful, modest and unenthusiastic practical judgment is required in each particular case to find out whether or not it is worth establishing a contestability differential in a specific situation in order to reap the benefits of a particular form of evaluation. You would have to make the case. In fact, something similar was done in the evaluation field in its early days under the headline of *evaluability assessment* (Smith, 2005). The idea in evaluability assessment is to gauge carefully whether a particular situation is ripe for evaluation and whether it is likely that evaluation will be of any benefit to decision makers. Perhaps evaluability assessment at that time was too mechanical and too much based on simple rationalistic assumptions. Nevertheless, it did represent modesty in evaluation that we are lacking today. Most evaluators today no longer believe that evaluability assessment should be used to check the meaningfulness of evaluation before evaluation is institutionalized.

Therefore certain contemporary trends in the evaluation field itself *invite* one to be sceptical. Such trends include the increasing spread of evaluation in time and space, the closer alliance with management, and the increasingly mandatory nature of evaluation. The present belief in evaluation seems to suggest that such second-order constructions are *naturally* to be preferred. A constructionist perspective adds a healthy dose of scepticism to that idea. The very decision to evaluate is itself socially contingent. There is nothing natural in the production of second-order reflection. It is logically impossible to reflect all the time about everything (Bateson, 1972). The demand for endless reflection and learning and development is presently under attack as a part of contemporary cultural criticism (Brinkmann, 2014; Sennett, 1998). Feminists and others point to the high price that is often concretely paid for the abstract ideal of "development" (Klouzal, Shayne & Foran 2003).

In fact, it may be individually or collectively decided to remove certain social phenomena from an evaluative gaze. We love our children in a way that does not require evaluation. There are beliefs, practices and relations that we cherish for how valuable they are and not for the extent to which they can be evaluated.

Then again we must remember that we live in a society with many views, values and perspectives, and decisions to view a particular thing in a particular way only hold for so long. Others may wish to produce data about phenomena that we thought were better protected without any second-order description or analysis. Demands for evaluation are made from many perspectives (think tanks, journalists, politicians, trade unions, NGOs etc.) The capacity to evaluate is widespread in our society and does not depend on social consensus. Anyone with a computer can make a survey. Perhaps I myself have subscribed too long to an idea that there could be a consensual collective regulation of evaluation. As Vattimo (1992) points out, we live in a type of society where the ideal of transparency has in fact led to a multiplication of perspectives on reality. Perhaps a constructionist perspective can help us live with that situation.

A constructionist perspective on evaluation reveals that what some would take for granted as data and facts are the specific result of a whole configuration of phenomena that must be held in place for that particular picture of the world to be produced. This analytical move can help weaken the supernatural quality that some have conventionally attributed to evaluative data, especially quantitative data. We know that any evaluation creates a

politically relevant abbreviation of reality (Wolin, 2006: 21), but a constructionist perspective allows us to discuss it as such.

A constructionist perspective can also demonstrate that production of evaluative data facilitates the co-construction of problems, relations, and accountability that could have been constructed otherwise. The field of evaluation itself in fact helps and encourages a certain doubt and scepticism about the use and consequences of evaluation. The very concept of use is today contested, and its alternatives are conceptually fragmented and lacking systematic empirical base (Herbert, 2014). In other words, even evaluators cannot guarantee what comes out of evaluation.

For a constructionist, consequences of evaluation unfold in complex, contingent, and fragile ways. We cannot predict them or know them for sure. In fact, we can think or hope that some evaluations in some circumstances could have some consequences that we find fruitful. In that case, we would have to rely on some establishment of some form of a contestability differential in the given situation. But the way in which we engage with it would have to be careful. Philosophically, that kind of thinking would be in line with the *philosophy of practical wisdom*, meaning that careful judgment will have to be carried out in a situated, and embedded way, much in the spirit of Aristotle´s *phronesis*. After our analyses of evaluation and the contestability differential, we can add, however, that practical wisdom today must include contingent reflexivity, i.e. taking into account the complexity related to the introduction of a second-order constructions. A reference to *praxis* is, in other words, no longer a guarantee for any authentic principle that guides indisputable action, it merely refers to the complexity of taking into account reflexive and less-reflexive forms of acting and being in the world in the same practical situation. It is up to us in a given situation to construct or deconstruct the contestability differentials that are necessary for evaluation.

A careful and attentive way of working with evaluation is consistent with what Vattimo (2004) calls “weak thinking.” In weak thinking, there are no absolute guarantees. There would thus be no ultimate principle under evaluation that cannot be questioned, and any contestability differential would only be established on a temporary and fragile basis. We would not know exactly how long which constructions should be taken for granted. But accepting weak thinking in evaluation would be no small accomplishment. Vattimo (ibid.) points to the close link between certainty in knowledge and authority in social life.

Acknowledging weak thinking in evaluation is a logical outcome of seeing evaluation and its consequences as social constructions. Weak thinking means not being subordinated to authoritative regimes of data. It means attending to multiple qualities in education and other practices; paving the way for evaluations with less anxiety and fear; and sometimes creating spaces for the deliberate protection of that which cannot be evaluated. It also means making sure that evaluative practices are not carved in institutional stone and not infused with more power than necessary. It also means asking simple political questions to evaluation: Why this focus? Who benefits? How well does an evaluation help solve democratic problems as they manifest themselves concretely in a particular situation?

This line of thinking is also consistent with a philosophy of practice, emphasizing the importance of experience and situated judgment, but with added attention to second-

order constructions. It is a great challenge, however, that we have only limited accumulated experience with these new, overwhelming, large evaluation systems that are constructed by and constructive of our contemporary social order.

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Evaluation in a Relational Key

Sheila McNamee

Education today is replete with quotas, competencies, standardized testing, and – in the United States – the "common core" curriculum, all designed to insure student success. And, is it not the case that we all want our children, our students to succeed – both in terms of financial viability and quality of life (which is assumed to be directly related to level of education)? While it is safe to assume that the current state of education has been molded with the best intentions of policy makers, educators, and parents, it is not difficult to recognize that the focus of current educational practice is outcome driven, where outcome is measured in quantitative test scores. In most cases, how students perform on a standardized test is more important than what they can *do* in everyday situations. With such attention on test scores, it might be worth asking if too little consideration is given to the *process* of education itself. Specifically, it is the *relational process* of education that is ignored in favor of emphasizing structural and procedural techniques in education.

I do not mean to imply that educators and policy makers disregard what actually goes on in an educational environment because, certainly, they do concern themselves with designing educational processes that they believe will help teachers and students meet the standardized goals that have been established for each level of learning. Yet these educational processes are designed *in absentia* of real people – teachers and students – in their situated, local contexts. We could liken our current educational state to the following: Imagine training future surgeons via textbooks or online diagrams, graphs, and documents. These resources would provide full lessons in anatomy, procedures for making incisions, removal of specific organs and body parts, procedures for arresting effusive bleeding, fusing various arteries, and stitching multiple layers of flesh together. Yet, no body mirrors the perfect anatomy of the textbook nor complies with what aggregated data (used to provide instructions in textbooks) suggests in terms of quantity of blood, tissue, or disease prototype. While these textbook and internet-trained surgeons might be well versed in the current knowledge of the field, they would have no practitioner's skill, thus no ability to effectively operate on a human body.

This improbable scenario underscores the dominant belief about education – that it is designed to reproduce established ideas and inculcate existing social norms. Specifically, the belief is that there is a body of knowledge to be transmitted and, when done so successfully, we can have confidence that we are producing engaged citizens, professionals with expertise, and knowing minds. Yet there is an alternative. That alternative is the possibility of understanding education as a generative process in which

knowledge is collaboratively constructed; not mastered or memorized but actually created in interaction. What would education look like if our classrooms and schools were filled with engaged, participatory activities that encouraged collaborative meaning making? And, most important to my present argument, what might evaluation within educational contexts look like if we assessed processes of relating rather than individuals' separate capacities? In other words, what could education look like if we invited students and teachers to become self and relationally reflexive concerning what they are creating together in their daily activities?

We are faced with three major areas of critique of the current educational system. First, there is the focus on educational procedures, steps and techniques rather than relational processes in the educational context. Second, we confront the limited conception of "knowledge" as a commodity passed from learned educator to less learned student. Finally, we have an understanding of education as both relying upon and delivering "experts." And, since expertise is commonly understood as a measure of an individual's competency in some field, the expert orientation leaves little room for collaboration and relational engagement in education.

In the remainder of this chapter, I will identify how each of these three areas of critique has debilitating consequences not only for education in general, but for educational assessment, specifically. The cornerstone of education is learning and yet traditionally learning has been determined through measurement – through assessment of "knowledge gained" in relation to "knowledge disseminated." There are two questions we must ask: What relational processes are necessary to insure that students and teachers – all learners – emerge with new ways of understanding the world? And what alternative modes of assessment might help us examine the efficacy of various ways of living together and what they make possible; in other words, can we create practices that invite us to evaluate our collective efforts in daily problem solving and by so doing strengthen our resources for social transformation?

Educational Traditions: Individual Minds, Educational Techniques, and Experts

There are many good sources chronicling the evolution of educational practice. And, true to form, education at large is a perfect image of a modernist worldview (McNamee, 2007). The rise of individualism – originating in the Enlightenment – has surely left its mark on education (as well as all other cultural institutions). Educators aim to "import" knowledge into the minds of individual students. The frame that is most often used for thinking and talking about education is one that positions "knowledge" as an entity or commodity that can be transmitted from teacher to student. The teacher is the content expert and s/he delivers that content into the minds of individual learners.

There are many illustrations of "alternative" forms of education (Schon, 1987; Holzman, 2009; Rogoff, Turkanis, and Bartlett, 2001, to name a few). Yet, education, largely, remains within the dominant individualist discourse of our culture. We need only

look to the common and expected practices within education to see that the focus is on individual students and their individual comprehension, ability, and performance. Standardized tests help us gauge how each individual "measures up" compared to the majority of age or level peers. These educational traditions emerge when the unquestioned focus of learning is on self-contained individuals (Macpherson 1962; Sampson 2008). We channel our efforts in education to the sole learner and we judge knowledge and ability only of singular persons. When we look into the dominant activities that constitute what we call education, we see forms of practice that are conducive to conveying knowledge (e.g., lectures, power-point presentations), thereby providing mechanisms to support our already existing structures (specifically, our educational system and the political and economic aspects of that existing system).[1] This tradition is predicated on the hope that education will serve as a stabilizing institution creating the sort of people who will fit into our established cultural institutions and practices.

What institutionalized education ignores is the generative possibility of education. The institution of education should be recognized as transformative, as one that creates the world. And, in the best of circumstances, this is, indeed, what happens. We educate children so that they can learn not only how to live in the world but how to create the future. We educate adults to provide them with resources for becoming engaged citizens. Yet, when we treat teaching/learning as a domain where knowledge is delivered or dispatched to the unknowing mind, the implication is that learning is a process of transmitting to students facts and evidence about the world. Holzman says

> *…a model of human understanding that is based on knowledge, that is, on knowing x about y – is education's chief structural defect ... Might it be that the over identification of learning and teaching with the production, dissemination, and construction of knowledge is at the root of school failure, teacher discontent, and school mismanagement?* (1997, p. 5-6).

Holzman's argument hinges on movement away from epistemological issues (i.e., issues of what knowledge is and, related, what learning and teaching are) toward embodied activities. Embodied activities refer to those visceral ways in which we move others and are moved by them in conversation. This is more than verbal or non-verbal aspects of our interactions. Embodied activities are those engagements that also shape and are shaped by our relations with others. I share Holzman's sentiments and would like to focus on how refiguring teaching and learning as a collaborative activity might open new forms of practice. Specifically, I would like to explore how assessment and evaluation – central aspects of our current educational system – can be refigured within a relational sensibility. Can we invite others into generative and transformative conversations where we create what counts as knowledge together?

[1] It is interesting to look at what is happening in higher education in the US. The push for larger courses (i.e., more students with one professor), as well as the hiring of adjunct and part-time faculty are responsive to economic issues/demands and blind to considerations of "good education."

Education as a Process of Social Construction

This view of education is informed by social construction (Gergen, 2009, 2009a; McNamee and Gergen 1999) where learning is described as a relational achievement. Social construction is premised on the following (Gergen 2009):

> *The way in which we understand the world is not required by 'what there is' (5) . . . The ways in which we describe and explain the world are the outcomes of relationship (6) . . . Constructions gain their significance from their social utility (9) . . . As we describe and explain, so do we fashion our future (11) . . . Reflection on our taken-for-granted worlds is vital to our future well-being. (p. 12)*

As we can see, from a relational orientation, meaning is created and maintained in collaborative activities with others and with our environment – meaning is relationally achieved. Since meaning and knowledge are by-products of relations, neither can be merely conveyed from one mind to another. The implications of this orientation for education are significant. Now, education is conceptualized as a creative process in which educators and students engage in relations that collaboratively produce meaning. This perspective is aligned with Paulo Freire's (1970) ideas and the distinction he makes between educational metaphors of "banking" vs problem solving, where "banking" presumes that educators/teachers "deposit" information into the minds of students. Problem solving education, on the other hand, refers to a view of education as a process where students and teachers engage in dialogue, becoming collaborators in the construction of "knowledge." Freire says, "no one teaches another, nor is anyone self-taught" (1970, p. 67).

One important implication of this perspective is that it requires that we replace our emphasis on individuals and their internal motivations, intentions and perceptions with an emphasis on the coordinated activities of people engaging with one another. The process of teaching, as well as the teaching relationship, takes center stage and attention to the content of what people do or say recedes as our major focus. Once knowledge is viewed as a collaborative construction; it is seen as a relational achievement, not a private, cognitive process. To the constructionist, abstract information cannot be transmitted or internalized. Rather, what we take to be information (for example, knowledge and meaning construction) is relationally accomplished as people coordinate actions to produce meaning that is deeply connected to their histories. Therefore, knowledge is not merely accumulated in the mind of an individual; it is generated in the constant embodiment of people relating with each other.

Because this educational process transcends traditional cognitive engagement of its participants, I prefer to address it as transformative in two respects. First, there is the transformation necessary for addressing the active involvement of all participants in the production of knowledge; this is the transformation from the traditional hierarchical "banking" model to a collaborative orientation to education. Put otherwise, knowledge is

the by-product of the continual coordination of meaning among educators and students. In their attempts at coordination, all are challenged to entertain different ideas, meanings, and understandings. The second form of transformation is the move toward recognition that the knowledge that emerges from coordination among educators and students creates, itself, an understanding whereby the world can be seen anew. Education is a transformative process to the extent that people are transformed as they relate (coordinate) and, at the same time, their processes of relating transform the way they understand the world. This orientation to education differs significantly from traditional orientations toward and practices within education.

There are several implications for learning and teaching when we speak of knowledge as emerging within communities of people working together. There is no uniformly "right" way to learn or teach. There is no universal codification of knowledge. Knowledge will vary from community to community. Various pedagogical theories, for example, will generate different understandings of what counts as knowledge and concomitantly, what counts as an adequate demonstration of learning (or teaching). These judgments, in turn, will have serious implications for professional practice. And the conversations that take place in different learning contexts will vary, thereby expanding what counts as knowledge, as effective learning, or as good teaching.

Thus, education is not defined by a specific formula. With no predetermined formula to follow, how might we proceed in the doing of education and, more specifically, in the assessment of education? Can we begin to consider forms of teaching and evaluation as relational performances engaging both teacher and students? When we do, teaching becomes a joint activity where new resources for action emerge. How can we engage in the activity of teaching and evaluation such that we approach it as a form of practice, an activity, a conversation rather than a technique?

The Limited Conception of What Counts as "Knowledge"

Before moving on to discuss what participatory evaluation might look like, it is important to take a brief look at the main focus of education: knowledge. Earlier I described the common view that knowledge is a commodity, a thing, an entity, or object that is passed from a "knowing mind" to an "unknowing mind." Our taken for granted understanding of knowledge is that, as individuals grow and develop, they accumulate knowledge at an appropriate rate. Thus, we would not expect a five year old child to understand the complexities of the financial market, yet we would be astonished to learn that someone in their thirty's did not have minimally a rudimentary understanding of basic economics. Our assumption is that knowledge grows as we grow.

Yet, from a relational stance, knowledge is not an accumulation of facts and information. Rather, it is the communal construction of what we come to view as facts and information – in other words, what we *value*. What any one person knows is limited

to those language communities of which s/he is a part. This shift in what we understand as "knowledge" has significant implications for education and clearly for assessment as well. For example, is an educator evaluating the cognitive abilities of a student when she gives an exam or is she evaluating the quality of the coordination between herself and that student, as well as among all participants in the class, others with whom participants have interactions and relations, the status of world affairs, etc.? If the latter is the case, then clearly the evaluation is not of the student but of the interactive processes transpiring both within and outside of the classroom.

Additionally, if education is not about transferring information/knowledge from one mind to another, what does it mean to be educated? Can we say that an educated person is one who engages in reflexive critique? One who examines the interactive processes that give credibility and vitality to certain forms of life and not others? If this is the case, then shouldn't assessment/evaluation be focused on the capacity for reflexive critique – that is, the ability to question one's own taken-for-granted understandings and consider alternatives? With these questions in mind, let's explore the potential of participatory assessment in education where focus is on inviting all engaged into reflexive critique.

Participatory Assessment: Lessons from the Field

While teaching relational theory and social construction to my university students, I find it necessary to first make the taken-for-granted visible. This requires a full elaboration and articulation of modernism as the dominant discourse and it's focus on the self-contained individual. Of course, to most (if not all) students, this conversation in itself is confusing and potentially dangerous. Am I really saying that their view of the world is a "discursive option" and not a "fact?" Does this mean that everything is "up for grabs?" All the terms by which we know ourselves are "ways of talking" and not Truth, but only a local truth? This heresy is hard to swallow and, of course, there is enormous resistance (despite repeated assurances that I am not telling them this is "wrong" but simply telling them it is a constructed reality).

Like most, the resonance of constructionist ideas blossoms when students can connect them productively to their own lives. This generally starts when they begin to consider how they will be evaluated in my seminar. If there is no ultimate Truth and the standards by which we make decisions and judgments are byproducts of coordination within communities, then why is it that I, as the professor, have the power to decide whether students' performances in a class are excellent, average, or poor? Good question; good connections. This is the moment I realize they are beginning to understand the shift from focusing on individuals to focusing on processes of relating. I find this a pivotal moment since assessment is what students have been encouraged to think about as most important in their lives and particularly in their education. Their degrees, their grades, and even their choice of discipline (they have been told) will be the key to success in life.

Yet this is a complicated discussion because it confronts what I consider the "first wave" of understanding the relational orientation of social construction. This first wave entails letting go of the idea that there is an objective Truth that can be (and often times has been) discovered. After a while, most students start to become intrigued with this idea that "the limits of my language mean the limits of my world" (Wittgenstein, 1953). They begin to see it in many aspects of their lives. Who they are in their work contexts is quite different from who they are with their friends and roommates. But the reason I consider this a first wave of understanding is because it simultaneously frees students to embrace the distinctions, incoherencies, and multiplicities that they prefer in their own lives while simultaneously accusing and critiquing anything they do not prefer as "modernist" or "individualist" (e.g., the professor's right to disperse grades).

With one foot firmly planted in a relational sensibility and the other firmly planted in the individualist tradition, students begin to tell stories of their attempts to introduce their friends, colleagues, and family members to constructionist ideas. Yet, in this "first wave," their stories always end with descriptions of admonishing their interlocutors for their "individualist orientation." Stories about the conversations they have with others usually end with a statement like, "And then I told him, 'you are being an individualist!'" At that moment, my response is, "and so were you in that moment," pointing out that in labeling and negatively defining the other, my students have indirectly declared a "new Truth" that is relational. The challenge is to invite them to recognize multiple truths and not use one truth to obliterate another.

This is "first wave" to me because, in admonishing their partners, they are proclaiming a "better truth." The relational orientation of social construction is not about Truth. It is focused on curious and reflexive engagement with difference. And thus, the second wave emerges when students themselves can engage in reflexive critique about what we are learning together. In what I am calling the first wave here, students are still exhibiting a right/wrong discourse where, what they are learning in class becomes the "new Truth." Once they step into the reflexive stance of curiosity, that Truth disappears and alternative, yet internally coherent, ways of being – even if unacceptable from one's own moral order – come in to focus. Probably more important, these seemingly incoherent alternative "truths" become the focus of interested inquiry and curiosity as opposed to judgment and critique.

Since discussion with my students about evaluation often serves as the entry point for grasping the relational sensibility of social construction, I leap on the opportunity to play with and design relational forms of evaluation.

Relational Evaluation

I would like to open dialogue on the implications of a constructionist stance toward evaluation – more specifically, a participatory stance. Over the years, I have

attempted to engage in evaluative processes that are coherent with my constructionist stance and certainly my students (and colleagues) have helped create some interesting alternatives. Most relational forms of evaluation emerge in the flow of interaction within a specific semester and course.

My own attempts have been focused on reconstructing evaluation as a relation process. As I reflect on the past three decades and the diverse approaches my students and I have taken toward evaluation, I see a common thread of collaborative, participatory practices. It is important to remember that participatory inquiry is central in constructionist work (see McNamee, 2014; McNamee and Hosking, 2012) and that an ethic of participation centers curiosity (over certainty), multiplicity (over singularity), and a focus on the future (over a focus on past causes).

In the remainder of this essay, I would like to describe some evaluative processes my students and I have designed and used over the years. I will attempt to point out how these modes of evaluation resonate with a participatory stance. My hope is that these illustrations provide a generative resource for engaging in relational forms of evaluation – forms that prioritize respect and appreciation for the collaborative construction of knowledge as well as the collaborative aspects of our institutional (academic) achievements.

Relational and Participatory Evaluation: Lessons from Abroad

In the mid-1980's I had the good fortune to be invited to Italy as a Visiting Professor. This was an opportunity for intellectual and personal development. Yet, beyond that, it offered me a new stance from which I could reflexively examine just about everything I took for granted. Most of us are familiar with the transformative nature of travel. These experiences invite us to examine our own assumptions due to our emersion in different ways of being and interpreting the world around us. Such was the case for me in Italy.

One of the common practices I had to master while teaching at an Italian university was the ritual known as the *oral examination*. At this time in the Italian university system, examinations were oral, not written. Students endured long, nerve-wracking interrogations by their professors. My participation in and observation of this ritual gave me a lot to think about. Of course, given my American assumptions about university exams, I was initially horrified that these poor students had to expose themselves to such rigorous and potentially humiliating evaluative processes.[2]

However, by the time I had made my trans-Atlantic trip home and resituated myself in my own familiar classroom, I had entertained a series of provocative thoughts. I

[2] In the US, oral exams are primarily limited to what we call "defenses" of Master's or Ph.D. level work. They comprise only one part of the evaluation process for graduate degrees and are rarely part of the undergraduate experience. During my time in Italy, the practice of oral examinations was the primary procedure for evaluating undergraduate students at the university.

began to think about the potential inconsistency between what I was teaching my students (i.e., a relational orientation to the world) and the forms of evaluation I was using (written examinations and research papers). By asking each student, independently, to record his or her (allegedly) *private* knowledge on a written exam or in a research paper, I was teaching one philosophical stance and practicing another. The same applied to the brief consideration I gave to the notion of oral exams. I was struggling to find a way to build the relational construction of meaning (knowledge) into my practices of evaluation. Looking back, I can see this attempt – the very idea that I was even considering these issues – as a first step toward participatory evaluation. However, the connection might not be clear to the reader. Let me explain the trajectory this exploration opened for me.

Plagued by the problems of individual evaluations, I developed a variation on the theme of Italian university oral examinations. I announced to my students (a practice I would later find less consistent with the collaborative sensibility of constructionism) that they would be participating in an oral evaluation for the course. Their immediate response was fear, understandably. I asked them to have faith and listen to a description of the process. I then told them that they were to select one friend or family member who they would like to invite to participate in a conversation with them about the material we were studying in our course. They could bring anyone they chose. I asked them not to "prepare" their guests for the conversation. There would be no specific expectation of their guests beyond their spontaneous participation in conversation during the "exam." My hope was to meet two objectives: (1) to transform an otherwise individual and critical process of evaluation into a relational, generative process where each student, his or her invited guest, and I could appreciate the specific resources developed in our course through a participatory *dialogue* and (2) to create a context that would invite students to discuss the abstract conceptual and theoretical material we were exploring in the course *while simultaneously* articulating it in a manner that was *practical*, *pragmatic* and *accessible* for anyone (i.e., for their guest).

This process of evaluation was rich. Needless to say, it took hours of my time but I thoroughly enjoyed it. Students brought their mothers, their fathers, their siblings, their friends, boyfriends, girlfriends, roommates, co-workers. I would make one short introduction after greeting my student and his or her guest. In this introduction, I would invite the guest to "help" his or her friend or family member by simply participating in conversation. If the guest wanted to expand on what he or she understood the student to be explaining, s/he should feel free. If the guest felt that the student was not being clear, s/he should say so. I asked our guests to avoid trying to "make the student look good" and explained that any attempt to let the student use obtuse language without translating into common vernacular would, in fact, probably not be helpful to the student. My aim was to encourage our guests to *collaborate* with the student in a conversation where knowledge

would be crafted jointly. Obtuse or abstract language would clearly miss the mark of dialogue and turn quickly into a monologue.[3]

In order to evaluate each student's performance during his or her "oral exam," I invited each person present (myself, the student, and the guest) to summarize the hour-long discussion by commenting on what we all learned, what the highlights of the conversation were for each person and what we each would like to develop further if we could have a second conversation. Not only did students walk away from this process feeling that there was at least one thing they could really do well as a byproduct of participating in our course, but they left having someone else in their life – outside of our class – with whom they could continue the conversation. Someone significant was now grappling with the implications of individualist and relational ideologies. There was someone to talk with in a way that would value and appreciate the collaborative and transformative nature of our daily lives.

The story's end must be about the ultimate evaluation: grades. Of course this process of relational and participatory evaluation had to be eventually translated into the language of the institution. Oddly, I have never found it difficult to look a student in the eye after engaging in a dialogic process like this and say, "That conversation was a C.[4] Don't you agree?" Or, more frequently I ask, "How would you rate our conversation?" It is amusing to me to recognize how at ease we are (student and professor) offering this "ultimate" evaluation in the form of a grade after participating in a collaborative evaluation process. I suppose both students and I have come to value our mutual attentiveness to the ways in which we relate, making space for very different expressions of competence and expertise by being fully present in the process where students construct *knowledge* with their guests. We are engaged in this process *together*.

Institutional Discourse and Evaluation

The practice described here does not necessarily transform the institutional discourse of evaluation. And there is more to say about the dominance of that discourse. A very practical and useful illustration of our own participation in subjugating discourses (Foucault, 1980) arises when my students challenge me, as I indicated earlier they always do, claiming that my practice of grading them is inconsistent with what we are talking

[3] Sampson (1993) describes the different between monologue and dialogue. He says: ". . . the monologic perspective . . . direct(s) us to look *within* the individual, when our attention needs to be focused *between* individuals . . . The monologic approach thereby helps to sustain existing relationships of power that require just such a failure of vision in order to be sustained" (p. 19). Dialogue, on the other hand emphasizes ". . . the idea that people's lives are characterized by the ongoing conversations and dialogues they carry out in the course of their everyday activities, and therefore that *the most important thing about people is not what is contained within them, but what transpires between them"* (p. 20).

[4] The standard grading (or marking) system in the US is A (excellent), B (superior), C (competent), D (marginal), and F (failure).

about in my seminars. I maintain the authoritative voice and serve as the ultimate one to assess their competence. Yet, as Foucault points out, we participate in our own subjugation. I point out that we all have chosen to accept membership within the university. As a condition of our membership, there are certain institutional practices that are expected and required. Among these are the requirement that I give my students grades and that they receive grades at the close of the semester. The recognition of our own hand in what feels like subjugation (i.e., I feel "forced" to give grades; they feel grades are "forced" upon them) opens the door for new forms of practice. Specifically, we can now discuss *how* we can all meet the demands of the institution (which through our chosen membership, we have implicitly agreed to uphold) while remaining consistent with the relational stance of constructionism.

A suggestion I always make is to shift the view that the grade I give to a particular assignment is an evaluation of the person. Instead, I offer that we might view this grade as an indication of how *our* conversation is going. And, further, if a student would like *our* conversation to improve, s/he can re-do an assignment. Students can continually re-submit their work throughout the semester and they are the ones who decide when the quality of our conversation is satisfactory.

This particular practice is, like all relational engagements, time-consuming. However, it also privileges the objective of education; it invites students to really wrestle with course material and work on it without fear of failure. Students can choose how important it is for them to enter into conversation. They also become fully aware of how challenging the ideas of social construction can be. And at the same time, over the course of a semester, they find ways to fully integrate the ideas into their lives. This generates local knowledge as opposed to abstracted knowledge to be memorized and regurgitated on an exam or in a paper.

Building a Learning Community

First, as suggested in the illustrations above, time must be spent inviting students into a very different kind of learning context. The dominant discourse of education is so inculcated in students (and educators) that the creation of a collaborative learning environment certainly does not come "naturally," nor easily. It is important to spend time at the very beginning of a course working with students to build a sense of community.

There are many ways to build community. Elsewhere (McNamee, 2007) I have described a community-building activity based on students' stories of a highpoint in their learning experiences. These highpoints do not have to be in formal educational contexts; they can be from any part of a person's life. Exploring what it was that made each of the learning contexts so successful invites students to consider how to recreate vibrant learning contexts. The activity invites students to engage in reflexive thinking and step away from cultural (and local) educational expectations.

Another way of building community is to invite students to use one of many dialogue models described in the book, *Mapping Dialogue: Essential Tools for Social Change* (Bojer, Roehl, Knuth, & Magner, 2008). Here, I divide the class into groups of 10 or fewer people and pose the following question: *How can this class create a dialogic community where all voices are heard, all participants are present, and deep discussion linking readings to everyday practice can be pursued?* Each group selects two different dialogue methods from the book to guide them in their conversation addressing the question posed. Each group has two separate meetings, one for each dialogue method selected. During the dialogues, they video record the session so they can later review it and select excerpts to share with the entire class highlighting aspects of the process the participants thought went well as well as aspects of the process they thought did not go very well. Addressing these questions invites students into a reflexive posture where they can examine how well different dialogic methods help create a sense of community. The result of this activity yields multiple suggestions in answer to the question I have presented. Yet more important is the opportunity this activity offers for students (most of whom do not know each other or do not know each other well) to get to know each other and build a relational context that lasts for the remainder of the course.

An Invitation: The Wall of Praise (and Critique)

Let me offer one last illustration of relational evaluation. Once a sense of community is established among a group and they feel as if they know each other, I ask each person to think about the particular course in which we are engaged. With the topic of the course, the materials we will be reading and discussion, and the projects they might consider in mind, I ask them to make a list of the resources and abilities they (each person individually) bring to the group that will help us create a vibrant and successful class. Next, I ask them to make a list for each of the other students, indicating each person's resources and abilities.

I collect all the lists and organize them such that there is one page for each student. The page starts with the student's (Sally's) own list of resources and abilities, and then continues to list the resources and abilities all other classmates have listed for Sally. Moments before our next meeting, I post each student's list on the wall of the seminar room. When students enter, I invite them to walk around and read the lists. Of course, people gravitate initially to their own list. As they read, something interesting happens. First, they note all the repetition on the amended lists. That is, they see immediately their own identified resources and abilities and recognize how frequently their peers agree. Next, students take note of resources and abilities identified by their peers but not noted on their own list. This difference expands each person's sense of what they bring to the group. It offers a new way of understanding themselves in relation to each other. Finally, students might note some abilities and resources that they, themselves, have listed but

that no one else has mentioned. This too, is interesting information and can raise many important questions such as: *Should I try to show this ability in a different way? Is this ability/resource perhaps not pertinent to this particular group? Is this a story about myself that no longer fits?* Again, this activity creates the conditions for self-reflexive inquiry. Students feel praised and might also feel critiqued. But critique is not a standardized assessment of good or bad behavior; it is simply a marked distinction in how we understand ourselves and each other; it is fodder for reflection.

Reflexivity: A Critical Component

As a university professor, evaluation is a necessary aspect of my daily work, although I have never felt confident in my ability to evaluate my students. I have always harbored the fantasy that, as a professional (expert), I should be able to evaluate my students with certainty. As a scholar whose work is devoted to constructionist theory and practice, I have never had the pleasure of embracing the cornerstones of evaluation: certainty and objectivity. The tradition of evaluation requires several features that are at odds with my constructionist stance. These features include a knowing individual, a truth, reality or set of facts that are objectively knowable, and certainty on the part of the evaluator that she or he can clearly (objectively) determine that those being evaluated really *know* in the *correct* fashion.

Because constructionism embraces knowledge as a relational, social achievement rather than a private, individual ability, the notion of local truth (rather than universal truth) and uncertainty (rather than certainty) – that is, the entire foundation upon which "reliable" evaluation rests – is questioned. If what we take to be true, real, and correct is the byproduct of our engagements with each other, then how is that the professional educator is the only one capable of claiming what will count as "right" in the evaluation of students?

Clearly, the tension I personally feel between what my professional position and my philosophical orientation require of me, in itself, speaks directly to the limited status of education and educational evaluation. That limit, as I have noted, is the limit of focus on evaluating individuals and their individual abilities. My hope is that in the illustrations noted above, attention is directed toward interactive processes in education instead of individual performance. The focus is on what "we" are creating in the educational context. The illustrations I have offered here are not perfect examples of collaborative evaluation; rather, they offer points of departure. What is common in these points of departure is the possibility for students and educators to collectively enter into a reflexive stance where institutional discourses are acknowledged/respected and challenged simultaneously. It is a stance that provides the opportunity for all participants in the educational endeavour to recognize their active part in creating what counts as knowledge, what counts as success or failure, what counts as interesting or boring, and – most important – what counts as

meaningful learning. Evaluation becomes a reflexive process of examining what is being created in an educational context. Reflexivity is central to a relational understanding of education.

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Assessment and Pedagogy in the Era of Machine-Mediated Learning

Bill Cope and Mary Kalantzis

Technology is a social construction in the obvious sense that it is the product of human artifice. However, once we get the technology into our hands, we are often inclined to forget its invented-ness. Instead we experience the intrinsic 'object-ness' of technologies. We have things that we use, need and perhaps come to like. These things come to transform our lives. They seem to have a determining life of their own. In this way we reify technologies as if it is the things themselves that change our lives—which of course, in an obvious sense, they do. In our lives with technology, however, there is more scope for human agency than the immediate impressions of thing-ness lead us to believe.

In this chapter, we want to explore the role of technologies in learning, and in particular, technologies that can be used to assess for evidence-of-learning. Our focus is what Alan Turing called 'computing machinery', to highlight the thing-ness attributed to machines. To be specific, we want to examine the ways in which and the extent to which computing machines can provide an artificial complement to the intelligence of teachers and students in the business of pedagogy and assessment. To the extent that we limit our focus on the thing-ness of machine-mediated learning, we can observe the ways in which the application of technologies change educational practices.

However, taking a perspective in which technologies and their application are only ever a human construction, tangible objects that are the product of human designs and designed to have human effects, the formulation becomes somewhat different. Technologies of various kinds can be created to serve various agendas, and then, in their application, they can be used in quite different ways, some obvious, some based our imagination of alternative uses and better human lives. Technologies do not (simply) determine the patterns of our action. They offer us affordances, or a range of different modes of action.

Moreover, as we will set out to show, the machines can be set to very different kinds of work. To the extent that computing machines are software-driven, they can structure human action in very different ways—collecting different kinds of data, proving learners and their teachers with very different kinds of feedback, extending their human intelligence in very different ways to very different ends.

In order to make our case about the range of social constructions and human possibilities in machine-mediated learning and software directed patterns of interaction

with these machines, we're going to start by describing the objects that constitute educational technologies. Then we analyze the range of affordances offered by these technologies as evidenced in a range of very different kinds of application to the processes of pedagogy and assessment. Some uses apply and intensify traditional pedagogies and assessment modes; other uses—sometimes using the same foundational technologies—open out new and transformative modes of pedagogy and assessment.

A Very Short History of Technologies in Education

In a 1954 article published in the *Harvard Educational Review*, B.F. Skinner foreshadowed the application of 'special techniques ... designed to arrange what are called "contingencies of reinforcement" ... either mechanically or electrically. An inexpensive device,' Skinner announced '... has already been constructed' (Skinner, 1954 (1960): 99, 109-110). The teaching machine that Skinner was referring to was not yet 'electrical'. It still used analogue technologies similar to a mechanical cash register or calculator. Some assumptions about pedagogy and assessment were written deeply into the machine. A lone child is presented material, a question is posed by the machine as substitute teacher, the student gives an answer, and then she is judged right or wrong. If right, she can move on; if wrong she must answer again. This is behaviorism epitomized, and also mechanized.

FIG. I. A recent model of a teaching machine for the lower grades. The machine operates on the principles described in the accompanying article. Material is presented in a window with a few letters or figures missing. The pupil moves sliders which cause letters or figures to appear. When an answer has been composed, the pupil turns a crank. If the answer was right, a new frame of material moves into the window and the sliders return to their home position. If the answer was wrong, the sliders return but the frame remains and must be completed again. (This is a later version of the device described in Skinner's 1954 paper.)

Source: (Skinner, 1954 (1960))

The technologies that Skinner called ‘electrical’, or ‘computing machines’ in Turing’s terminology, were first applied to learning with the creation of the PLATO (Programmed Logic for Automatic Teaching Operations) learning system at the University of Illinois, starting in 1959. The University had been designing and testing the ILLIAC mainframe computers since 1951, the PLATO system on ILLIAC was the first time a computer had been used for an educational application. ‘Application’, however, is a misnomer because the computer could not simply be applied to education. It had to be (re)designed to align with the social construction that is education. The following now foundational technologies were invented to serve this social end. This was the first time a computer was used as a mediator in human-to-human messaging, the first time they had been used as a conduit for written language. This was the first time that visual displays were needed, so the plasma screen was invented. To represent visuals, a graphics application generator was created. Synthetic sound was created. This was where the first simulations, games, synthesized music and online chat were created.

The PLATO story is apocryphal. The ‘objects’ that are technology were constituted by social need, and education was at the center of their initial design. The moral of the story for educators it to take the lead in technology development, and not to simply apply hand-me-down technologies. We can and should be social constructors, demanding that technology follows.

Through the decades following, PLATO’s foundational technologies have been transferred into the everyday lives of billions of people, initially in the form of personal computers. These were subsequently connected up via the wires of the internet, and then wirelessly via a panoply of ‘smart’, mobile devices. These have changed our lives, and are changing education.

Fast forward now to the twenty-first century. If technology-mediated learning is by no means new, developments of the past half-decade stand out: deep network integration of digital learning environments through ‘cloud computing’, and the generation of ‘big data’ (Mayer-Schönberger & Cukier, 2013; Podesta, Pritzker, Moniz, Holdern, & Zients, 2014) that can be connected and analyzed across different systems. The effects of these developments are destined to intensify over the next few years.

Once again, the significance of ‘cloud computing’ (Erl, Puttini, & Mahmood, 2013) is social more than it is technological. We characterize this as a shift from personal computing to interpersonal computing. From the 1980s, personal computing provided mass, domestic and workplace access to small, relatively inexpensive computers. From the 1990s, the internet connected these for the purposes of communications and information access. Cloud computing moves storage and data processing off the personal computing device and into networked server farms. In the era of personal computing, data was effectively lost to anything other than individual access in a messy, ad hoc cacophony of files, folders, and downloaded emails. In the era of interpersonal computing,

the social relations of information and communication can be systematically and consistently ordered.

This opens out the social phenomenon that is popularly characterized as 'Web 2.0' (O'Reilly, 2005). It also supports massively integrated social media. This turns data that was before this socially inscrutable, into socially scrutable data. By interacting with friends using social media such as Facebook or Twitter, one is entering these providers' data model, thereby making an unpaid contribution to that provider's massive and highly valuable, social intelligence. By storing your data in webmail or web word processors, Google can know things about you that were impossible to know when you had your files on a personal computer and downloaded your emails, and this 'social knowing' has made it into a fabulously valuable advertising business.

More and more learning also happens in the cloud, not in separately installed programs or work files on personal computing devices. In education this includes: delivery of content through learning management systems; discussions in web forums and social media activity streams; web writing spaces and work portfolios; affect and behavior monitoring systems; games and simulations; formative and summative assessments; and student information systems that include a wide variety of data, from demographics to grades. How do we harness this social intelligence in the service of pedagogy and assessment?

'Big Data' in Education

First, a definition: in education, 'big data' are: 1) the purposeful or incidental recording of interactions in digitally-mediated, network-interconnected learning environments; 2) the large, varied, immediately available and persistent datasets that are generated; and 3) the analysis and presentation of the data generated for the purposes of learner and teacher feedback, institutional accountability, educational software design, learning resource development, and educational research (Cope & Kalantzis, 2015a).

Since the middle of the first decade of the 2000s, two new subfields in education have begun to emerge: 'educational data mining' and 'learning analytics' (Martin & Sherin, 2013; Siemens, 2013). The principal focus of educational data mining is to determine patterns in large and noisy datasets, such as incidentally recorded data (e.g. log files, keystrokes), unstructured data (e.g., text files, discussion threads), and complex and varied, but complementary data sources (e.g., different environments, technologies and data models) (R. S. J. d. Baker & Siemens, 2014; Castro, Vellido, Nebot, & Mugica, 2007; Siemens & Baker, 2013). Although there is considerable overlap between the fields, the focus of learning analytics is to interpret data in environments where analytics have been 'designed-in', such as intelligent tutors, adaptive quizzes/assessments, peer review and other data collection points that explicitly measure learning (Bienkowski, Feng, & Means, 2012; Knight, Shum, & Littleton, 2013; Mislevy, Behrens, DiCerbo, & Levy, 2012; Siemens & Baker, 2013; West, 2012).

Leaders in the emerging fields of educational data mining and learning analytics speak clearly to what they consider to be a paradigm change. Bienkowski and colleagues point out that "educational data mining and learning analytics have the potential to make visible data that have heretofore gone unseen, unnoticed, and therefore unactionable" (Bienkowski et al., 2012). West directs our attention to "'real-time' assessment [with its] ... potential for improved research, evaluation, and accountability through data mining, data analytics, and web dashboards (West, 2012). Behrens and DiCerbo argue that "technology allows us to expand our thinking about evidence. Digital systems allow us to capture stream or trace data from students' interactions. This data has the potential to provide insight into the processes that students use to arrive at the final product (traditionally the only graded portion). ... As the activities, and contexts of our activities, become increasingly digital, the need for separate assessment activities should be brought increasingly into question" (Behrens & DiCerbo, 2013). Chung traces the consequences for education in these terms: "Technology-based tasks can be instrumented to record fine-grained observations about what students do in the task as well as capture the context surrounding the behavior. Advances in how such data are conceptualized, in storing and accessing large amounts of data ('big data'), and in the availability of analysis techniques that provide the capability to discover patterns from big data are spurring innovative uses for assessment and instructional purposes. One significant implication of the higher resolving power of technology-based measurement is its use to improve learning via individualized instruction" (Chung, 2013). DiCerbo and Behrens conclude: "We believe the ability to capture data from everyday formal and informal learning activity should fundamentally change how we think about education. Technology now allows us to capture fine-grained data about what individuals do as they interact with their environments, producing an 'ocean' of data that, if used correctly, can give us a new view of how learners progress in acquiring knowledge, skills, and attributes" (DiCerbo & Behrens, 2014). Pea also foreshadows a shift in pedagogy and assessment, facilitating increasing personalization and individualization of learning (Pea, 2014).

But in making these assertions, have we allowed the apparent thing-ness of technology get the better of us? The technology will not make these changes. The social agendas that produced the technologies will be the agents of change. These social agendas are various, and deeply contested.

Education in Two Social Constructions

Schooling as we know it—mass, institutionalized compulsory education for children, and post-compulsory formal education in schools, colleges and universities—can take a variety of forms. In our book, *New Learning* (Kalantzis & Cope, 2012), we described and analyzed three pedagogical paradigms: didactic, authentic, and transformative. For the purposes of this chapter, we are going to speak of just two

paradigmatic forms of education, one which we will here call ‘didactic/mimetic’ and the other ‘reflexive/ergative’. With the second, we hope to recapture what we had previously called transformative pedagogy, while acknowledging its roots in authentic pedagogy. With this renaming, we want to call out some salient features relevant to the assessment of evidence-of-learning.

Our purpose in characterizing these two forms is to illustrate the quite different ways in which education can be socially constructed. These social constructions, moreover, are frequently at odds with each other. They are deeply contested, and the roots of this contest are centuries long. They represent some of the great debates in education. Then, when it comes to the application of educational technologies to learning and assessment in the twenty-first century universe of cloud computing, the social web and ‘big data’, the two frames of reference are put to work in completely different ways. This supports our claim that technology does not in itself produce effects. Rather, it can be put to very different uses depending upon your social construction of education. Technology offers affordances. It does not in itself determine social agendas, actions or outcomes. These remain as wide open as ever.

Of course, alternatives are never so simple as a quintessential two. We simply use this is an heuristic, as a way to classify and interpret the different social constructions and educational applications of technologies in learning and assessment. In the messiness of reality, we find shades of one merging into shades of the other. Nor is either of the two necessarily older/newer, ethically good/bad, or more/less effective in the achievement of educational purposes. In the first instance, all we want to suggest is that social constructions imbricate technologies, and these imbrications have effects.

Here, in brief are our two paradigms:

Didactic/Mimetic Pedagogy

The traditional classroom is an information and communications technology. Here is that classroom: we find ourselves in a space confined by four walls, just large enough for one-to-many oral exegesis by a teacher without voice amplification. The desks or lecture theatre seats are in rows, arranged so the eyes of learners are directed to the teacher and not each other. The teacher faces the opposite way, the only person in the room able to observe every learner within a single field of vision. They have the blackboard for writing. These are the spatial aspects of the technology. There are also necessarily temporal aspects: logistically, the same class must be offered in the same timeframe. There is an essential synchronicity, represented by the cells of the timetable and the disciplinary practice of punctuality. This is a peculiar technology, quite different from others in the world, and immediately recognizable as formal education.

This classroom is also a discursive regime. St Benedict is credited as the founder of western monasticism, precursor to modern universities of schools. His ‘rule’ was that it ‘belongeth to the master to speak and to teach; it becometh the disciple to be silent and to

listen' (St Benedict, c.530 (1949)). To the limited extent that students have an opportunity to speak, there is a gestural routine of a 'hands-up', if and when a student is asked to speak or is requested by the teacher to speak. The scope for students' speaking in this techno-social frame is limited pragmatically by the time delimitations of a lesson in which it would be wasteful for everyone to speak to everything. So, typical teacher talk was directed by their peculiar script—an initiating question ('what?', 'how?', 'why?' ...) anticipating a correct answer; followed by a response (in which a student selected by the teacher attempts to align their response to what the teacher was expecting); followed by an evaluation ('that's right', 'that's good', 'no, think again', 'can someone else suggest ...'). As the selected student stands as a proxy for the rest of the class, there can usually only be one answer. This is classical classroom discourse (Cazden, 2001).

A few things change with twenty-first century educational technologies, but not as much as it would first seem. For the 'flipped classroom' (Bishop & Verleger, 2013) the teacher records a video of their lecture and distributes it online. It is possible to view the lecture at any time and in any place, but the student remains in the same discursive relation to the teacher and knowledge as originally prescribed by St Benedict. Even putting up one's hand to ask a question is eliminated. The electronic whiteboard may be interactive and bring into the classroom the endless knowledge resources of the internet, but all students' eyes still need to be directed to the board and its master, the teacher.

Then we have the technology of the textbook. The pedagogies of the Academy of Ancient Athens were dialogical and dialectical. After the invention of the printing press, the sixteenth century textbooks invented by the prolific Petrus Ramus, professor at the University of Paris, were designed in a completely different way (Ong, 1958). Page by page, chapter by chapter, the students followed the professor—all on the same page as the same time. The textbook resigned knowledge (Euclid's geometry, for instance) in a pedagogical order, in digestible synoptic chunks, from the knowledge components deemed simpler and foundational by the textbook writer, to components deemed more difficult and logically consequent. It was laid out in a spatial array, a series of strictly sequential chapters, sections and subsections. Textbooks referred to an outside world, resynthesizing (summarizing, simplifying putting that world in a pedagogical sequence) any and every conceivable aspect of that world. Their reference point was always exophoric—for instance, the geological, poetical, or enumerable things in an externally-referable world. Students read this peculiar textual genre; they may have annotated the book or made notes as a mnemonic; and they took tests at the end to demonstrate what they had remembered. E-textbooks reproduce this textbook form, with a few textually and pedagogically trivial differences—the pictures can move, and the quiz at the end of the chapter is a little smarter than the questions in a printed book with the answers printed upside-down in the back of the book. But the students are still positioned as knowledge consumers—absorbers of information to be remembered, routines to be replicated, or definitions to be applied.

Whether the technologies are those of the twenty-first century or those of the classroom in earlier modernity, the pedagogical mode remains fundamentally the same. They are didactic in the sense that the teacher and textbook tell while the student listens. They are mimetic in the sense that the student offers evidence of learning by demonstrating that they have copied the received knowledge as their own, that they have remembered what they have been told.

The unit of measurement of learning is the individual—what a lone person has managed to remember. It is retrospective, looking back from the end of a learning experience to see how much of the prescribed knowledge has been absorbed. In the era of technology-mediated learning, we might intensify the experience of individualization and mechanize the processes of memorization with personalized or adaptive learning. However, we have always been able to do a version of that by allowing some students to progress faster through the textbook. If anything, personalization intensifies the individualization of learning that typifies didactic/mimetic pedagogy. The listener to a lecture, the reader of a textbook, and the taker of a test have always been essentially alone. They are still alone, perhaps even more alone, when learning is just between them and their computing machine.

In didactic/mimetic pedagogy, learners are also assumed to be the same, or at least their relative success or failure ease measured against a standard set to normality. Lectures, Q&A routines and textbooks, whatever their media, reflect a one-size-fits-all pedagogy. The subsequent tests to measure evidence-of-learning are then 'standardized'—meaning that if every learner is expected to learn the same thing, and if we give them all the same test, we can make comparative judgments of what has been learned on the basis of a singular, homogeneous set of expectations.

Reflexive/Ergative Pedagogy

For as long has it has been around, story-ists and biographers have portrayed children's awful experiences of didactic/mimetic pedagogy—Dickens' fictional Mr Gradgrind or Winston Churchill's actual Latin teacher. Educational reformers and the philosophes of liberal modernity have long railed against this pedagogy. Here, at the end of the eighteenth century is Rousseau:

> *Teach your scholar to observe the phenomena of nature; you will soon rouse his curiosity ... . Put the problems before him and let him solve them himself. Let him know nothing because you have told him, but because he has learnt it for himself. If ever you substitute authority for reason he will cease to reason, he will be a mere plaything of other people's thoughts* (Rousseau, 1762 (1914): 126).

Then, in the twentieth century, the great educational reformers, beginning with Montessori and Dewey—at once theorists and experimental practitioners—set to work designing alternatives that were an explicit counterpoint to didactic/mimetic pedagogies. We call these alternatives 'reflexive/ergative'. By 'reflexive' we mean cycles of interaction with ideas, and objects and other learners, designed and coordinated by

teachers. By ‘ergative’, we mean work-focused—the work of making knowledge rather than memorizing received truths, and evidence-of-learning in the form of made knowledge artifacts.

Rousseau and his successors all wanted learning to break out of the confinements that are the four walls of the classroom, the cells of the timetable and the chapters of the textbook. In the same spirit, today, ubiquitous computing opens the possibility of ‘ubiquitous learning’—learning any place, any time, any how (Burbules, 2009; Cope & Kalantzis, 2009b). Our personal computing devices have self-teaching pedagogical routines in the form of help menus and learning sequences with an accessible entry point but which systematically and progressively expand one’s capacity for doing and knowing (Gee, 2003). A whole world of knowledge—a real and highly varied world of knowledge rather than the univocal synthesis of knowledge by the textbook writer—is a hyperlink away.

We can also move away from inferences about the inner nature of mind, manifest in the focus on memory and cognition that distinguishes didactic pedagogy and its characteristic assessment modes. John B. Watson, founder of behaviorism, warned against trying to infer inner mental states but to focus on activity in the context of an environment (Watson, 1914). Today, behaviorism has been discredited for its focus on the mechanics of stimulus-response-reinforcement, as if the learning mechanisms that can be induced in a caged rat or pigeon, could be applied as the central focus of pedagogical science in the case of humans. Lost in this critique of behaviorism, however, was its powerful case for looking at learning-action in learning environments, rather than trying to infer abstractions about cognition. The tests of the twentieth century became more and more elaborate attempts to extrapolate from test answers cognitivist abstractions—the ‘g’ of general intelligence (IQ) or the ‘theta’ of understanding. The most sophisticated of computer adaptive and diagnostic tests today use complex statistical computational methods to do the same thing.

Returning to the spirit of Watson, in an ergative pedagogy, we propose a focus once again on activity in environments. We mean ‘works’ here, in two senses. The first sense comprises sequences of visible knowledge-actions. Elsewhere, we have classified these actions as experiential (experiencing the known and the new), conceptual (naming/defining/classifying, and building theoretical schemas), analytical (causal/procedural and critical), and applied (appropriately within an anticipated frame of reference, or creatively beyond) (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009a, 2015b). The second sense in which we use the word ‘work’ is to focus in the trace that is left when the focus is making knowledge artifacts. Here, we position ourselves in a long tradition of active knowledge making and project-based learning (Kilpatrick, 1918; Waks, 1997). In undertaking a ‘work’, students go through an active, phased process that we characterize has knowledge design, from conception to realization. Whether it be a worked solution, a documented experiment, an historical interpretation, or a diagramed argument, the business of making

a knowledge artifact is a staged work process that has a beginning-middle-end narrative structure. Traces are left in the form of a finished product. The provenance of this product can also be traced, when the stages of the knowledge work are also documented. Now students are conceived as creators of knowledge and not just consumers. They are knowledge workers, who produce knowledge artifacts. So, we will not attempt to assess cognitive abstractions to determine the outcomes of learning. We will assess the things they have made, and the processes of their making. By your works, you shall be known.

In this case, we are now able to credit the distributed, social sources of cognition (Bereiter, 1994, 2002; Gee, 1992 (2013)). And we can make learning a more social, more collaborative experience. Instead of closed book, memory-based exams that create the fiction of individual cognition, students can work on knowledge projects in which they link to their sources by way of acknowledgement. Instead of working on their own, they can offer peer feedback and acknowledge that feedback. They can work together, creating collaborative knowledge works. In today's online writing and assessment environments, it is possible to trace the social provenance of every component in a knowledge work, and to create a culture of recognition of the social, distributed and collaborative nature of intelligence. In such learning environments, stealing others' work not only becomes unviable; it becomes what it always was, an un-necessary byproduct of the fiction that cognition is individual.

And finally, in a work-focused pedagogy, the differences between learners come to be clearly voiced. If your making knowledge rather than just remembering what you have been told, the content of your experience and timbre of our voice will inevitably come through. No two knowledge expressions can be the same, and the differences become a productive resource for learning (Kalantzis & Cope, 2009).

Clearly, we're advocating reflexive/ergative pedagogy here, in preference to didactic/mimetic—but not entirely. First, it's harder to do—though e-learning technologies make it much more practicable than in the past. However, second, for some domains and in some contexts, didactic pedagogies are simply more efficient and less circuitous. Such might be the case, for instance, of 'intelligent tutors' which teach skills that can be broken into a clear sequence—algebra or chemistry, for instance. In this sense, our two paradigms might be seen as strategic pedagogical partners, each more appropriate in some learning contexts than others.

Assessment in the Mechanization of Didactic/Mimetic Pedagogy

Now, we'll look closely at the use of computer-based assessment in each of these pedagogical frames. The latest computing technologies can be used to support processes as broad and divergent as the range of alternative social constructions of learning. The social construction, in other words, is more importantly determining of pedagogical modes and outcomes, than the technologies. Technology is no more than a means to

social ends. Its forms and functions are determined by those ends. In the case of didactic/mimetic pedagogy, computer-mediated assessments can reproduce, even intensify, its social agendas.

Temporality: Retrospective and Judgmental Assessments

In didactic pedagogy, the test is a peculiar artifact. It is in most respects different from the processes of learning—books are closed, interactions with others are forbidden, time is strictly delimited. It is retrospective and judgmental. At the end of a defined stretch of learning, the examinee answers questions created by an expert examiner, and the examiner uses the results determine the extent of learning. Assessment artifacts include select-response tests, supply response item-based tests, and essay assessment. Mechanization suits these kinds of tests.

Select response tests were made machine-readable with the pen-and-paper 'bubble test' in the third quarter of the twentieth century. In the twenty-first century, the item-based test has been moved onto the internet, with secure access from personal computers and laptops. Because these kinds of test are relatively cheap to mechanize, test makers and administrators come to reframe disciplines around what is testable using that technology. So, for instance, item-based reading comprehension tests become a proxy for literacy in general, to the neglect of writing. And it was a particular kind of reading at that, one which is able to elicit relatively straightforward yet frequently not-crucial 'facts' from a text, but not meanings that require interpretation (which character do you relate to? which argument do you find the more powerful?). In recent decades, psychometric techniques have grown in sophistication (and statistical obscurity), in order to measure comparative performance of learners as they undertake standardized assessment tasks. Computer-adaptive testing offers a group of students' questions that are continuously recalibrated to be at just the right level of difficulty for each student. A wrong answer means that the next question you are given to answer will be easier, a correct answer and it will be harder (H. H. Chang, 2014).

More recently, machine learning and data mining techniques have been applied which 'train' machines to match trace data with data to which human judgments have been applied. Examples include essays analyzed using statistical natural language processing algorithms (McNamara & Graesser, 2012; Shermis, 2014; Vojak, Kline, Cope, McCarthey, & Kalantzis, 2011), the tracking of navigation paths through games, simulations or intelligent tutors (Fancsali, Ritter, Stamper, & Berman, 2014; Mislevy et al., 2014; VanLehn, 2006), and patterns of keystroke or clickstream activity in learning management systems. In each case, these patterns are correlated with expert appraisals of performance or test scores created in other environment. The machine is then able to predict success based on the correlations with patterns associated with success or failure in the other environment.

These techniques, however, remain retrospective and judgmental. They do not provide much feedback, if any, which a learner could constructively act upon going forward. They produce grades containing a general exhortation (‘well done!’ or, ‘try harder!’) but are not actionable. They position a student in a cohort without giving meaningful feedback about their own progress (because the progress of the whole norms away individual progress). Psychometric constructs such as ‘g’ and ‘theta’, and the machine-estimated grades of educational data mining, can only offer overall judgments of success and failure because the constituent components of what they are measuring are themselves meaningless—an isolated question in a test where an a/b/c/d answer may be accidentally right or wrong, keystroke patterns, or statistical parallels in language patterns between human graded essays and newly processed ungraded essays. The principal focus is to mechanize the process of generation of an overall, retrospective judgment. This was ever the case with tests.

These methods of mechanization also expand the scope of the testing process, meaning that students are subjected to more tests, and more frequently. The statistical and computational voodoo, whose logic and procedures are accessible only to expert ‘learning scientists’, serves to add an aura of scientificity and hypermodernity. Pedagogically and in their social construction of education, however, these tests are the same old thing.

Knowledge: Mimetic-Mnemonic

Didactic/mimetic assessment processes, as high-tech as they may have become, still test memory, or the replicability of ‘skills’ in the form of non-negotiable epistemic routines. Curriculum (a time for memorizing and skill-building) is still mostly separated from assessment (a time to demonstrate memory through recall and the successful application of skills in the form of correct answers). Learning management systems and e-textbooks present content, then test in order to make cognitive inferences. Intelligent tutors lead learners through hierarchical knowledge sequences, helping them to remember these as replicable ‘skills’. Even if cycles of memorization and recall are small, the two processes remain separated. To the extent that learners replicate the steps for themselves, eventually coming to a right answer (or failing to come to that answer), following Piaget (Piaget, 1971), this process is deemed ‘constructivist’ (Windschitl, 2002).

Learners: Individualized

Because memory and skills are located in the brains of separate persons, assessment in the regime of didactic/mimetic pedagogy is individualized. Indeed, assessment is even more intensely individualized than the experience of pedagogy because tests are designed to isolate individual memory from its past social sources and present surrounds.

Source: http://www.scmp.com/news/asia/article/1297468/thai-university-mocked-over-examblinkers

Some of the more recent technologies intensify this process further. Computer adaptive and personalized learning bring continuous assessment of memory and skills into learning. Learning is thus further mechanized in a relationship between the lone learner moving forward on their learning on the basis of the test answers they give to their machine.

Learner Differences: The Normalization of Inequality

The norm-referenced, 'standardized' assessments of didactic/mimetic pedagogy position learners in a cohort in a way that presupposes inequality, and to this extent constructs inequality. For the few to succeed, the many need to be mediocre, and some must fail. This is the mathematical logic of the normal distribution curve (Meroe, 2013). And some tests come to be called 'high stakes' because they really do determine life destiny; they really do manufacture inequality. The machine assessments and sophisticated psychometrics of today merely extend the human structuring of inequality through education, via processes that are now all the more effective for being more thoroughly mechanized.

Assessment in e-Learning Ecologies: Towards a Reflexive/Ergative Pedagogy

Many of the technologies of assessment that we have just mentioned can be differently applied to effect a very different social construction of education. Or different assessment technologies can be developed to serve the peculiar needs of the social

learning ecologies that we call education. We'll focus here mainly on the affordances of assessment using 'big data' and 'cloud computing' technologies.

Temporality: Towards Reflexive Pedagogy

Formative assessment is assessment during and *for* learning, providing feedback to learners and their teachers which enhances their learning. Summative assessment is retrospective assessment *of* learning, typically a test at the end of a unit of work, a period of time, or a component of a program. This distinction was first named by Michael Scriven in 1967 to describe educational evaluation, then applied by Benjamin Bloom to assessment of learning (Airasian, Bloom, & Carroll, 1971; Bloom, 1968). The subsequent literature on formative assessment has consistently argued for its effectiveness (E. L. Baker, 2007; Bass & Glaser, 2004; Black & Wiliam, 1998; OECD Centre for Educational Research and Innovation, 2005; Pellegrino, Chudowsky, & Glaser, 2001; Shepard, 2008; Wiliam, 2011). There have also been frequent laments that formative assessment has been neglected in the face of the rise of standardized, summative assessments as an instrument of institutional accountability (Armour-Thomas & Gordon, 2013; Gorin, 2013; Kaestle, 2013; Ryan & Shepard, 2008).

However, a new generation of embedded assessments enabled by computer-mediated learning, may reverse this imbalance (Behrens & DiCerbo, 2013; Knight et al., 2013; Pea, 2014). Indeed, it is conceivable that summative assessments could be abandoned, and even the distinction between formative and summative assessment. Take the practice of big data in education, or the incidental recording of learning actions and interactions. In a situation where data collection has been embedded within the learner's workspace, it is possible to track back over every contributory learning-action, to trace the microdynamics of the learning process, and analyze the shape and provenance of learning artifacts.

Here are some examples from the research and development work we have done to create the *Scholar* web learning environment (Cope & Kalantzis, 2013).[1] One assessment traditional mode, particularly for project-based learning and representations of complex disciplinary performance, is rubric-based review. In a traditional retrospective/judgmental perspective, an expert assessor assesses the work after it has been completed, asking questions such as 'did the creator of a knowledge work support the claims in their argument with evidence?'. In a prospective/constructive frame of reference, this can be reframed, addressing the same criteria of quality intellectual work after an initial draft. In

[1] US Department of Education Institute of Education Sciences: 'The Assess-as-You-Go Writing Assistant: A Student Work Environment that Brings Together Formative and Summative Assessment' (R305A090394); 'Assessing Complex Performance: A Postdoctoral Training Program Researching Students' Writing and Assessment in Digital Workspaces' (R305B110008); 'u-Learn.net: An Anywhere/Anytime Formative Assessment and Learning Feedback Environment' (ED-IES-10-C-0018); 'The Learning Element: A Lesson Planning and Curriculum Documentation Tool for Teachers' (ED-IES-lO-C-0021); and 'InfoWriter: A Student Feedback and Formative Assessment Environment for Writing Information and Explanatory Texts' (ED-IES-13-C-0039). Scholar is located at http://CGScholar.com

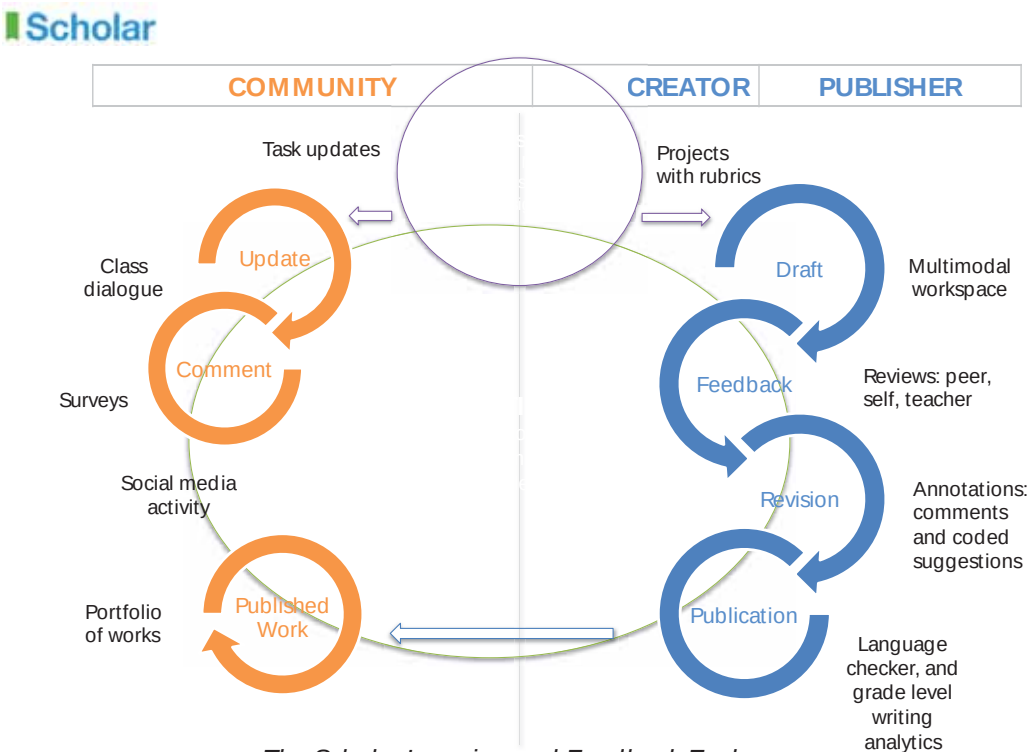
this case, the same review criterion in a rubric might be suggestive: 'how might the evidence offered by the creator in support of their claims be refined or strengthened'? There can be multiple steps in this process, before a work is finally 'published'. And there can be multiple perspectives: peer review, self-review, teacher or expert review. The difference in a cloud computing environment is simply logistical—many perspectives can be contributed to the same source text simultaneously, with rapid iteration from version to version. Then, it is possible to track the changes that have been made. This is a measure of progress rather than ends. It is also possible to evaluation social contributions, as outputs as well as inputs. What emerges also is a phenomenon called 'crowdsourcing' where the 'wisdom of crowds' (Surowiecki, 2004) is at least equal to the wisdom of experts. Indeed, our research shows that mean scores of several non-expert raters come close to those of expert raters, in addition to the value of receiving rapid qualitative feedback from multiple perspectives (Cope, Kalantzis, Abd-El-Khalick, & Bagley, 2013). Clear rating level distinctions, accessible to learners, also increase inter-rater reliability among peers (Kline, Letofsky, & Woodard, 2013; McCarthey, Magnifico, Woodard, & Kline, 2014; Woodard, Magnifico, & McCarthey, 2013).

Select response assessment can also be extended to provide helpful feedback that is constitutive of learning. We have been developing an extended learner-reflexive item type for our 'knowledge survey' module in *Scholar*. Learners receive a post-response explanation, where they an opportunity for the student to rank the fairness of the question and rate its difficulty. And in a 'think aloud' area, the student describes their original and revised thinking, or comments on the reason why they believe the question to be unclear or unfair if they consider it that.

Another area of our work has been to apply natural language processing technologies, not for grading, but to provide feedback for learners. Within *Scholar,* we have created a 'Checker' tool which makes change suggestions, including not only grammar and spelling, but synonyms as well. This tool presents alternatives which may or may not be correct, coded by change type (e.g. complex => simpler expression, or informal => formal/technical vocabulary). We have also created an Annotations tool in which peers or teachers can make comments or suggestions, coded for suggestion type. We are now working to extend this by developing a crowdsourced training model where a learner accepting a machine or human change suggestion progressively trains the system, and these changes are contextualized to learning level, discipline area and topic (Cope, Kalantzis, McCarthey, Vojak, & Kline, 2011; Samsung, Cheng Xiang, & Hockenmaier, 2013; Roth, 2004).

And a final example, we have begun to apply semantic tagging technologies (Cope, Kalantzis, & Magee, 2011) by means of which students can create diagrammatic representations of their thinking. This builds on a strong tradition of using computers for concept mapping (Cañas et al., 2004; K. E. Chang, Sung, & Lee, 2003; Kao, Chen, & Sun, 2010; Liu, 2002; Pinto, Fernandez-Ramos, & Doucet, 2010; Su & Wang, 2010;

Tzeng, 2005). We have applied semantic markup technologies to formative assessment of written project work—interim self-assessment to clarify one's thinking, and peer assessment to provide feedback to others (Olmanson et al., 2015 (in review)).



The Scholar Learning and Feedback Ecology

This reflects a mix of machine assessment and crowdsourced human assessment, as well as linking technology and persons by applying machine learning and artificial intelligence methods so the system becomes smarter as more data are collected—smarter in the sense that, based on past patterns that have been analyzed, the system can learn to provide progressively better feedback.

What we now propose in the contexts we have just described, is a learning environment where networked computers support intense human interaction and collective intelligence, in addition to machine-feedback. There are a variety of data types, for instance a qualitative comment by a peer against a review criterion, a language suggestion made by the machine, an annotation made by a peer, an answer to a select response question, a comment made in a class discussion. Every one of these is semantically legible in the sense that immediate, intelligible, actionable feedback is provided to the learner. And the datapoints are numerous: thousands and then millions for a student in an educational program; or for a teacher in a course over the duration of a

unit of work; or a cohort of learners in a school over a period of weeks. Learning analytic processes can be used to produce progress generalizations at different levels of granularity, but it is always possible to drill down to specific programs, learners, all the way down to every and any of the semantically legible datapoints on which these generalizations are based. Now all our assessment is as formative, and summative assessment is simply a perspective on the same data.

Two main conclusions can be drawn from this work. First, assessment can now be readily embedded into learning. As a consequence, the traditional instruction/assessment distinction is blurred. Learning and assessment take place in the same time and space. Every moment of learning can be a moment of computer-mediated feedback. The grain size of these datapoints may be so small and so numerous that without learning-analytic systems, they would have almost entirely been lost to the teacher. For instruction and assessment to become one, however, every datapoint needs to be semantically legible datapoint, or learner-actionable feedback. In this way, every such datapoint offers an opportunity that presents to the learner as a teachable moment. Such learning environments, where the distinctions between instruction and assessment are so blurred (Armour-Thomas & Gordon, 2013), might require that we move away from the old assessment terminology, with all its connotative baggage. Perhaps the notion of 'reflexive pedagogy' that we are now proposing might replace the traditional instruction/assessment dualism.

Second, the distinction between formative and summative assessment is blurred. Semantically legible datapoints that are 'designed in' can serve traditional formative purposes (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Wiliam, 2011). They can also provide evidence aggregated over time that has traditionally been supplied by summative assessments. This is because, when structured or self-describing data is collected at these datapoints, each point is a waypoint in a student's progress map that can be analyzed in retrospective progress visualizations. Why, then, would we need summative assessments if we can analyze everything a student has done to learn, the evidence of learning they have left at every datapoint? Perhaps, also, we need new language for this distinction? Instead of formative and summative assessment as different collection modes, designed differently for different purposes, we need a language of 'prospective learning analytics', and 'retrospective learning analytics', which are not different kinds of data but different perspectives and different uses for a new species of data framed to support both prospective and retrospective views.

Knowledge: Towards Ergative Pedagogy

Classical testing logic runs along these lines: cognition developed in learning => observation in a test => interpretation of the test results as evidence of cognition (Pellegrino et al., 2001). The test was a separate object, located after learning and supporting a retrospective interpretation. However, when then focus is on knowledge

artifacts, we have direct observation of disciplinary knowledge practice as-it-happens. Knowledge is assessable in the form of its representation in the artifacts of disciplinary practice (Knight et al., 2013). Now we have the basis for a less mediated interpretation of learning.

The focus of our attention to evidence of learning in the era of machine-mediated learning can now be the authentic knowledge artifacts, and the running record that learners create in their practice of the discipline. Our focus for analysis now is not on things that students can think, but the knowledge representations that they make. These artifacts constitute evidence of complex epistemic performance—a report on a science experiment, an information report on a phenomenon in the human or social world, a history essay, an artwork with exegesis, a video story, a business case study, a documented invention or design of an object, a worked mathematical or statistical example, a field study report, or executable computer code with user stories.

These are some of the characteristic knowledge artifacts of our times. In the era of new media, learners assemble their knowledge representations in the form of rich, multimodal sources—text, image, diagram, table, audio, video, hyperlink, infographic, and manipulable data with visualizations. These are the product of distributed cognition, where traces of the knowledge production process are as important as the products themselves—the sources used, peer feedback during the making, and collaboratively created works. These offer evidence of the quality of disciplinary practice, the fruits of collaboration, capacities to discover secondary knowledge sources, and create primary knowledge from observations and through manipulations. The artifact is identifiable, assessable, measurable. Its provenance is verifiable. Every step in the process of its construction can be traced. The tools of measurement are expanded—natural language processing, time-on-task, peer- and self-review, peer annotations, edit histories, navigation paths through sources. In these ways, the range of collectable data surrounding the knowledge work is hugely expanded.

How, raising our evidentiary expectations, can educational data sciences come to conclusions about dimensions of learning as complex as mastery of disciplinary practices, complex epistemic performances, collaborative knowledge work and multimodal knowledge representations (Behrens & DiCerbo, 2013; Berland, Baker, & Blikstein, 2014; DiCerbo & Behrens, 2014; Winne, 2014)? The answer may lie in the shift to a richer data environment and more sophisticated analytical tools, many of which can be pre-emptively designed into the learning environment itself, a process of ‘evidence-centered design’ (Mislevy et al., 2012; Rupp, Nugent, & Nelson, 2012).

Our evidentiary focus may now also change. We can focus on less elusive forms of evidence than traditional constructs such as the ‘theta’ of latent cognitive traits in item response theory (Mislevy, 2013), or the ‘g’ of intelligence in IQ tests. In the era of digital we don’t need to be so conjectural in our evidentiary arguments. We don’t need to look for anything latent when we have captured so much evidence in readily analyzable form

about the concrete products of complex knowledge work, as well as a record of all the steps undertaken in the creation of these products.

In these ways, artifacts and the processes of their making may offer sufficient evidence of knowledge actions, the doing that reflects the thinking, and practical results of that thinking in the form of knowledge representations. As we have so many tools to measure these artifacts and their processes of construction in the era of big data, we can safely leave the measurement at that. Learning analytics may shift the focus of our evidentiary work in education, to some degree at least, from cognitive constructs to what we might call the 'artifactual'. Where the cognitive can be no more than putative knowledge, the artifactual is a concretely represented knowledge and its antecedent knowledge processes.

Learners: The Social Mind

The environments we have been describing can also support social learning by recognizing and tracing the sociability of knowledge. The phenomenon of individual memory becomes less important as learners increasingly rely on the accessibility of social memory. Instead of mental recall, they can acknowledge social provenance of knowledge, the things they have looked up, that can readily be looked up again if and when needed. Far less important than memory, now, is a learner's capacity to navigate, discern and reassemble knowledge whose sources are acknowledged to be social. They can use also computing devices as cognitive prostheses—the data manipulations and information mashups by means of which the machine can extends their thinking. They can work collaboratively in environments where the relative contributions of different participants be traced and recorded. Then, the whole jointly constructed knowledge artifact can be acknowledged to be greater than the sum of individual contributions.

Today, we need to know more than individualized, 'mentalist' (Dixon-Román & Gergen, 2013) constructs can ever tell us. We need to know about the social sources of knowledge, manifest in quotations, paraphrases, remixes, links, citations, and other such references. These things don't need to be remembered now that we live in a world of always-accessible information; they only need to be efficiently discovered and aptly used. We also need to know about collaborative intelligence of a working group. And we can know this through the analyzable records of social knowledge work, recognizing and crediting for instance the peer feedback that made a knowledge construct so much stronger, or tracking via edit histories the differential contributions of participants in a jointly-created work.

Learner Differences: Equity and Diversity

The critique of norm-referenced, standardized tests is now well established, commencing perhaps with Benjamin Bloom's notion of 'mastery learning' (Airasian et al., 1971; Bloom, 1968). The objective of teaching and learning is for every student will

attain mastery of a particular aspect of a domain, and formative assessment can help to achieve this. Instead of retrospectively judging relative success and failure across a norm, formative assessment can tell a learner and their teacher what they still need to learn to achieve mastery. Every student then keeps working away, taking the formative assessments until they reach the knowledge criterion. Digitally-mediated learning environments can provide a repertoire of formative assessment processes that make mastery by all students logistically more feasible—criterion referenced instead of norm-referenced assessment (Kalantzis & Cope, 2012: Chapter 10). Moreover, making the knowledge process more sociable, creates learning artifacts that are more comparable to each other. For instance, making peers' works visible in during the processes of their development allows the creators of more developed works to give useful feedback to those whose works are less developed. Conversely, seeing others differently developed works in review means that you are in position to improve your own. And seeing exemplary finished works of others in their published portfolios creates clear models and expectations for works still in process. Such environments for learning and assessment offer a foundation for achieving greater equity in education, rather than institutionalizing inequality.

These are also environments where differences of learner identity, interest and aspiration can be recognized and put to productive use. The 'hands-up' routine in classical classroom discourse anticipates that one person, as a proxy for the rest of the class, will give the expected correct response. Discussions in a social media activity stream produce a manifest variety of responses and cross-class dialogue about the differences. Tests of memory and skill application anticipate replication of received knowledge, the same from one student to the next. Complex knowledge representations produce artifacts which are invariably different, evidence of differential voice, perspective and distinctive modes of thinking. The measure of success becomes comparability against disciplinary rubrics rather than sameness. Instead of assessing the standardized, epistemically-complaint bearer of received knowledge, we begin to assess the unique artifacts of the knowledge designer, who finds designs in the word to be sure, but redesigns these, refiguring knowledge in their own voice and from their own perspective (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000). This refiguring is the wellspring of creativity, innovation, and ultimately social change.

Conclusions

This chapter has attempted to address the ways in which technologies in education are only ever creatures of their social construction. It has also aimed to demonstrate the ways in which technologies can shape the full gamut of social constructions of education. For the purposes of argumentation, we have posited two archetypical pedagogical frames—didactic/mimetic and reflexive/ergative pedagogy. Both of these paradigms have

deep roots in the educational project of modernity. Educational technologies, we have argued, can intensify traditional didactic/mimetic pedagogies. Sometimes this may prove helpful, for instance in learning domains where their explicitness is simply efficient or their transparency is illuminating. At other times, we might accuse these pedagogies and their commonly associated methods of assessment for supporting the reproduction of inequalities and for being anachronistic in a world where we now put less premium on memory and the replication of skill routines, and more on problem-solving, innovation, creativity and knowledge agency. While there is nothing necessarily new about what we have termed reflexive/ergative pedagogy, educational technologies may simply serve to support the complex processes of social learning, making them more logistically feasible.

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